

G. A. TOKAEV

**BETRAYAL
OF
AN IDEAL**

**INTRODUCTION BY
SIR DAVID KELLY**

HARVILL

Politically this book begins with the enthusiasm of a boy for the ideal of a liberating revolution, and ends with the disillusionment of an adult at the deification of Stalin and the despotism of his State capitalist régime.

During the period described in these pages Colonel Tokaev was well acquainted with the outstanding figures of the day; he was a personal friend of Alleluyeva, Stalin's second wife, and gives vivid pictures of Ordzhonikidze, Bukharin and many others.

Besides being a documentary of the highest importance, Colonel Tokaev's memoirs are packed with human interest, recorded with stark and sincere simplicity.

Colonel G. A. Tokaev was born in 1909 in the North Caucasus and grew up while revolution and civil war were sweeping through his homeland. As an ardent young tractor driver he entered the Pioneer and Comsomol Organisations. In 1929 he went to Leningrad University as a student of engineering, and here he came in touch with oppositionist ideas and was soon 'voluntarily' expelled as a Right-wing deviationist. He then moved to Moscow, where he was able to resume his student's life, and became a member of the bureau of his Comsomol and head of its Agitprop department. In 1932 he was accepted as a full Party member, but within the first six months was twice expelled for independence of character. In the same year he first became a member of the 'Inside the Party opposition.'

Later he was chosen for the signal honour of training in the engineering branch of the Zhukovsky (aviation) Academy, one of the top establishments for training the senior personnel of the Soviet Air Force. Here again disaster awaited him, for he was denounced, expelled from the Party, beaten up, to an extent which endangered his life, and imprisoned. Eventually, however, he was released and reinstated.

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This episode ends the first volume of Colonel Tokaev's autobiography. As Sir David Kelly writes in his Introduction:

It contains the most vivid and illuminating picture from the inside of the first great stage of the Revolution, which has yet been published. There are two outstanding reasons for this: Colonel Tokaev has spent two years in the Pioneers, six in the Comsomol, sixteen as a Party member, he has been a member of the Officer Corps for fifteen years and a senior lecturer at a Moscow academy of university rank. On the other hand, he is not a Russian but a Caucasian, born into a proud independent patriarchal peasant culture. . . .

He is the most distinguished of the 'Defectors' who have sought refuge in the West. . . . He writes with a direct simplicity reminiscent of Defoe.

Colonel Tokaev escaped to the West from Eastern Germany, where he held the post of Marshal Zhukov's Scientific Deputy and Plenipotentiary of the Soviet Government and Politbureau for Aviation, Jet and Rocket problems.

*To the memory of my friends
and comrades who died victims
of the Soviet police-state terror.*



G. A. Tokaev, Moscow, January, 1943

BETRAYAL OF AN IDEAL

By

G. A. TOKAEV

With an Introduction by

SIR DAVID KELLY, G.C.M.G.

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G. A. TOKAEV

Translated from the Russian by

ALEC BROWN

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INTRODUCTION

COLONEL TOKAEV is the most distinguished of the "Defectors" who have sought refuge in the West. In this first volume of his autobiography he describes, with a direct simplicity reminiscent of Defoe, his life up to the great "Clean-up" of 1935; and it contains the most vivid and illuminating picture from the inside of the first great stage of the Revolution, which has yet been published. There are two outstanding reasons for this. On the one hand, Colonel Tokaev spent two years in the Pioneers, six in the Comsomol, sixteen years as a Party member; was a member of the Officer Corps of the Armed Forces for fifteen years; and for eleven of them was a leading Party member and a senior reader at a Moscow Air Academy of University rank. On the other hand, he was not a Russian, but a North Caucasian of the Ossetian national minority, born to the full tradition of a proud independent Patriarchal peasant culture. The book is pervaded by his own personality, which differs by a whole world from that of the normal Russian of the great plains, descended from Serfs and the heir to six centuries of submission to almost uninhibited despotism. While therefore he became at an early age an ardent disciple of the Revolution of 1917—and still is—he never really fitted into it, could never drift into the passive uncritical acceptance of the new tendencies which transformed it into the monolithic hierarchic Empire of Stalin. The conflict of the young idealist's personality with the hard facts of Soviet life in the twenties and thirties is real drama, and this dramatic element springs out in the framework of the simple narrative style and photographic memory of the author in a way that no literary artifice or straining for effect, no editorial or journalistic "touching-up", could achieve. There is never a false or suspicious note, and indeed the reader is often reminded, especially in the dialogues, of the best passages in some of the classic Russian novelists.

Drama came to the author in early childhood, for he lived through the years of terror in the Caucasus created by the disintegrating White Guards, and the early chapters hold their own with any

thrillers that have ever been written, a breathless tale of adventure and savagery, villainy and heroism. It was this experience which made him and his brothers, heirs to a tradition of national revolt against Russia, embrace nevertheless the Russian Revolution in a spirit of total idealism. The proudest moment of his life was when he became the star local tractor-driver, while on either end of his single wooden table were stacked Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, pamphlets by Bukharin, works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Pushkin, Lermontov, *Arithmetical Problems*, *Problems in Algebra*, and the Fordson Tractor *Handbook*—such was the library of a village boy of seventeen who had grown up in conditions fully as bad as those of Germany in the Thirty Years' War. "My education consisted of scenes of bloodshed, degradation, violence and rape." One of the queerest, yet most Russian episodes of this early life, is the story of the White Guard Officer Denisov, who after years of fantastic savagery—especially at the expense of the Tokaev family—kidnapped young Tokaev, hoping to use him as an intermediary to secure his forgiveness and devote himself to preaching and leading an exemplary moral life—and in fact deliberately surrendered when there was no need to.

Tokaev, having survived his first clash with authority when he was sacked from his Union for insubordination, set off with a scholarship at Leningrad. At the beginning of his journey he lost all his papers, money, boots and spare clothes in the train, and his experiences as a homeless comrade without money or identity papers were his first disillusionment. The story of his journey to Leningrad and final establishment there, of his attempt to enter the Kremlin and see Stalin, would make an admirable film—a perfect tale of the simple village idealist at cross purposes with Urban authority, first astonished and then recklessly angry when his word of honour was not accepted.

This volume is packed with personal incident recorded with stark, vivid simplicity, including his first love affair with the Trotskyite girl from Moscow who momentarily overcame his "bourgeois prejudices" only to reap a whirlwind of rather priggish abuse ("You are a fool," she said, "I've not been dishonoured by anybody and I'm not disgusting!"), but years later turned up miraculously when he was desperately ill in hospital. But all the incidents are beads strung on one main theme—the betrayal of the original Proletarian Revolution by "the Stalinist Oligarchy". "The Revolution produced its heroes but the Stalin counter-revolution has annihilated them." "The Revolutionary sword cut down the ladder of social and

national castes, but other caste notions have taken their place, monstrous and unprecedented. The banners of Lenin and Trotsky's revolutionary *dictatorship* bore the watchwords of proletarian internationalism, but today on the standard of the new *despotism* are the slogans of the national and even racial megalomania which in the Soviet Union we call *Russachestvo* (Russianism) . . . a fusion of Great Russian Chauvinism and Marxist-Leninist phraseology." He feels his generation has a "great moral obligation to inform the world fully of our grim experience" with "the very maximum of objectivity. There are facets of Soviet life which are essentially worse than any fiction about them. They require no underlining, no literary embellishment to make them startling." I do not think that any fair reader will deny that Colonel Tokaev has done exactly what he undertook to do. I have quoted his own words, lest I might seem, to one who has not read the book, to be attributing to him the theme which, knowing nothing of his experiences, I made a cardinal point in my first published writing on the U.S.S.R.—namely, the complete turning upside down of all the Bolshevik ideals in what I too described as Stalin's Counter-Revolution.

When Colonel Tokaev set out for Leningrad with his scholarship he had already had the experience of being sacked from Trade Union and Comsomol for demanding higher wages, but the episode had taught him nothing. "I was exceedingly arrogant and self-opinionated; I was single-minded to the point of the ridiculous and without any sense of humour at all. Coupled with this went a remarkably guileless trust in other people, to whom I ascribed my own frankness and abnegation of self"—including "the youthful ascetic's scorn for such forms of self-indulgence as tobacco and wine". He arrived at Leningrad at the time when "the transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat was already nearing its completion; a new type of official had sprung up, a state bureaucracy was rapidly forming", i.e., in the late twenties. But it had not yet formed, the transformation was not complete; otherwise Tokaev could not have "got away with" his series of outbreaks of insubordination. After losing his scholarship, and twice losing his job, he was "voluntarily" expelled from Leningrad for "right-wing deviationism" (this time for innocently telling the truth in a report on conditions in the North Caucasus after a visit in 1930). In spite of these disasters, he was allowed to resume student life, in Moscow in 1930, and became a member of the bureau of his Comsomol branch and head of its "Agitprop" department, thus becoming responsible in his ward for cultural education and the working up

of enthusiasm and activity for the ends laid down by the Propaganda. Of the student life in Moscow we get a picture reminiscent of "1984" ("The Ministry of Production have done a grand job—by the way can you swop me a razor blade?"), inspectors to see that everyone was up in the morning and lights out at night, washroom without hot water shared by men and women alike, visits to the hairdresser and public baths (compulsory once a fortnight) on coupon; the small number of razors he got from a Trade Union (one of his cultural jobs was to promote shaving) were soon hopelessly blunt; and "as for taking a girl to the pictures, such an exhibition of individual whimsy was not to be thought of". The couple who had drawn tickets for a show just had to go together—that was that. Young Tokaev, of course, had to fall in love with a girl from another students' commune where he lectured on political matters—and this was against the regulations. It was all very well for Agibaylova to be "a delightful girl of Cossack origin", a Southerner like himself with a "temperament as lively and expansive as my own", in whom he "saw the wild grace of a mountain Chamois". No doubt "the attraction was mutual. Our love was ethereal and pure"—but when he passed on this information to the President of his Commune and asked for "some such disposition of our free evenings as would enable us to meet", he was told his "bourgeois prejudices were unworthy of a leading member of the Comsomol", and when he persuaded the President to refer to the Management Committee, they reminded him that "the interests of the Commune were above those of any individual members". A sadder instance of Communist inhumanity was the refusal to let him visit his favourite brother Andrey, his "friend, comrade and teacher in one". Andrey had been a "passionate revolutionary idealist, thirsting for friendship and brotherhood", who when "worn out by work and strain", was forced to leave Leningrad and return to the Caucasus. Labelled right-wing opportunist, he was not allowed a bed in a hospital, and from the village where he lay dying alone and friendless he telegraphed "am dying without having seen you. Farewell. Be prudent . . . take care of our mother. Your Andrey." With a friend Tokaev approached the Director of the Workers' faculty: "Since when," asked the Director, "do Soviet folk waste their time on pointless journeys, just to bid farewell to the dying? Well, all right, he can manage that without you!" Five days later he learned of his brother's death. The story of Andrey's wasted thankless life of revolutionary fervour, and so many other episodes in this volume, again remind one irresistibly of George Orwell—how the shadow of the genius

which created "Animal Farm" and "1984" haunts the student of Communist history!

To me personally the most striking feature of Colonel Tokaev's work is his revelation of the existence of an "Underground" current of opposition and criticism, at least till the great Purges of the middle thirties; for no foreigner could even then know of this, and Colonel Tokaev is one of the very, very few who have been able to bear witness to it; and even he tells us there is much he cannot say, even about the early thirties, "without assisting Malenkov's police ferrets. For the files are still there; and often the mere mention of a name, a date, is enough to put the ferrets on the scent, their noses quivering on the track of every single person who had contact with so and so at such and such a time. . . . Stalin has gone . . . but the climate is the same, for it is the special climate without which Totalitarian States cannot live . . . on the stock of the primitive police force of Tsarist days Stalin has grafted a new breed, more up to date, far more efficient . . . and equipped with detailed records easily accessible to key investigators." It was a second visit, in 1931, to the Caucasus, when he found "not a single word of welcome", but a general misery and degradation which he innocently reported, which led to his joining the Underground in 1932—coinciding with his becoming a full member of the Party. The most typical spirit in the underground opposition seems to have been that of Bukharin; his conversations with the author are of much interest. Bukharin's idea was to work up a general spirit of resistance, without any organised conspiracy: "he was ready to talk about a new revolution, yet refused to admit that it was feasible until the masses had acquired a sense of what it all meant." Of particular interest are the accounts of secret conferences of the "Military Underground".

Despite fresh episodes, each of which would even then have been the end of most comrades, Tokaev was nearly selected for training in the NKVD, as the MVD was then called, and then instead selected for the signal honour of training in the engineering branch of the Zhukovsky (aviation) Academy. At once he became an officer, with unlimited notebooks and instruments instead of making his lecture notes on wrapping paper and the margins of newspapers; abundant rations and excellent meals instead of the "sparse rough food" of the students' canteen; 170 roubles a month for pocket money alone instead of 35 roubles to cover all expenses; well tailored clothes and linen, shoes, even gloves, of the best quality available, instead of "an ill-fitting tunic, trousers off the peg, and worn-out boots". As he says, "the plunge from smelly poverty to the sweet-

odoured and replete company of the *élite* was a physical shock", and "enough to turn a young man's head". The price was that "we did not have a single hour to spare . . . every moment of our long days was planned for us"; and small wonder that "despite the material comfort in which we lived, a considerable number of us failed to stay the course". Many were discharged on account of physical breakdown, but many broke down mentally under the "lunatic tension of incessant, fanatical study of the day-to-day official interpretation of dogma". The author says these were the hardest years he has known, the more so since they coincided with the Stalinist Purge (1934-8), and he kept up his morale by constantly repeating his favourite tag from Rousseau, "Man, be thyself."

The Zhukovsky Academy is one of the six top establishments for training the senior personnel of the Soviet flying services. Three of them train Commanding Officers; of the other three, for technical specialists, the Zhukovsky is the most important. When I reached the point of the author's admission to it, I imagined that the tale of his conflicts with authority was ending—but in fact the worst was still to come. From the beginning he could not keep out of trouble; first for giving away his month's salary to former student friends; then, when an Inspecting General (the GOC Alksnis) said, "Don't strain yourself," replying, "But I'm not straining myself!" then, for refusing to sing on a route-march; then for fainting when undergoing field punishment (standing at attention for several hours in August on the parade ground). This faint was a new offence, called disseminating "civilian democratism"; he improved on it by calling the Comrade Commissar a blockhead, but after a few weeks' solitary confinement, was reinstated. One would imagine that by now the author would really have learned, but not at all. When the terror launched by the assassination of Kirov was at its height he amused his fellow students with a long story ridiculing Stalin, Molotov ("a specialist in the seated posture") and Voroshilov—was denounced, expelled again from the Party, and ended by waking up in a freezing NKVD cell, handcuffed with his "whole body in agony as if nails were being driven into it"—but according to the NKVD records singing the Internationale and the Marseillaise. How he eventually was released and finally reinstated for the third time, after a year's disgrace, must be read in the book.

What the narrative, so clear as to facts, does not make clear is how Colonel Tokaev survived all these revolts. He stresses, it is true, that the transformation to Stalinism was incomplete; in "the responsibility for quenching independent thought, the annihilation

of the Kulaks . . . the criminal number one was Stalin, number two Kirov and Molotov number three", and he enjoyed the friendship of some of the still powerful Old Guard, and of Stalin's wife Alleluyeva, whose death he clearly hints was due to foul play. He also makes the interesting point that some of the NKVD Inquisitors were secretly hostile to the rising clique and helpful to him, as was General Alksnis, the GOC, himself. I do not think, however, these political cross currents tell the whole story. The young Tokaev must have had a real gift for attracting sympathy, and I should guess that he must have owed a good deal to one of the most characteristic Russian traits—the indulgence shown to youth. I saw many examples of this even during the worst period of the Cold War and the post-war internal tightening-up. One of the paradoxes of the Russian character is that its ruthlessness is linked with its emotionalism—he can do nothing by halves, can never grasp an idea without carrying it to extremes—hence in politics he is apt to see no alternatives between anarchy and autocracy, as in religion between militant atheism and formal superstition or oriental "mysticism". They have less self-confidence than any people I know. I always had the feeling that the key-men of the régime (Stalin and a few others excepted) take refuge in work to avoid questioning themselves; they do not seem the same stuff as the Himmlers and Hitlers, the pathological monsters thrown up by Nazism. To this peculiar brand of Slav schizophrenia we are probably indebted for Colonel Tokaev's survival, and therefore for this very original and instructive study of Soviet Russia.

There is a significant analogy in the reaction produced on a reader of this volume. Colonel Tokaev, with the same irrepressible honesty which was always breaking out in Russia, makes no secret of the fact that even in 1935 he still retained his early ideals of a democratic Communism; still believed that the collapse of the early Proletarian régime was due to the wickedness of Stalin, and says he would go back to the U.S.S.R. at once if freedom of political parties and discussion were restored. To the historian and the psychologist it is infinitely more likely that Stalinism was the true and inevitable development of the Marxist theory which could only be made to work by a realist-autocrat; that the idea of personal liberty is a dogma and an emotion which has no meaning if you once grant the materialist interpretation and the sole right of the community to own the means of production and distribution. The rights of the individual person have no logical basis on Socialist principles and it is humanly impossible to work the system if the right to object is

allowed. Anyone holding this view of Marxism, must regard Colonel Tokaev's principles much as the Stalinists regard his "right-wing deviationism"; but the point is that in reading his autobiography one is so attracted by his personality that one is indulgent to his ideas—and that I suspect was what happened in Russia. However that may be, I look forward—and so I believe will most readers—with keen anticipation to the promised further volume dealing with the Colonel's career from 1935 until his sensational escape thirteen years later.

DAVID KELLY.

HOW I CAME TO WRITE THIS BOOK

IT WAS a September evening in London. I sat reading once again the official minutes of the great Moscow trial of 1938. I buried my face in my hands as I remembered the past. Bukharin, the principal defendant, had been my teacher. We had parted ways some time before the trial, but it was to him that a group of my friends and I owed the social and political views we held at that time. So vividly did he stand out in my memory that he almost seemed present, in my modest London room.

There he sat, smothering me and Belinsky with erudite quotations, charging us with "opportunist passivity", warning us that, to be a worthy member of the Soviet community, a man had to be a man always and everywhere—an unwavering fighter for what he thought right.

I pushed my papers aside, switched off my table lamp and leaned back in my wicker armchair, abandoning myself to the memories that forced themselves on me. Before me, as on a screen, unrolled the events of the Stalin age as I had known them, but now with merciless objectivity.

Bukharin belonged to an older generation than Belinsky and me. He was one of the original leaders of the October Revolution. At one time Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party entrusted with ideological matters, he was also a member of the Politbureau and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. But in 1938 he was charged with plotting the restoration of Capitalism, tried, condemned and shot. But here he was, caught on the screen of memory, at a moment when, though deprived of all other posts, he was still powerful enough to be Deputy Commissar of Heavy Industry. It was in the Commissariat building that we visited him, Belinsky and I. I was twenty-three; Belinsky twenty-five. (Belinsky was not his real name—it was an under-cover designation by which we all knew him and under which he must remain concealed. He was killed in the defence of Moscow in 1941, after being for years active in the Communist Youth in opposition to Stalin. But others connected with him are still living.)

Bukharin had welcomed us cordially. He had much to say to us and spoke with great agitation, impulsively and compellingly. What it amounted to was this. If we, younger Soviet men, *men of the second generation of the Revolution*, did not learn to take ourselves more seriously, with a more lively interest in the events of the past, if we did not grasp the tremendous nature of the tasks which it should be our destiny to solve, if in matters of high politics we did not rid ourselves of the fatal Russian drift into "Oblomovshchina"¹ and galvanise ourselves into activity against those who were already deforming the Revolution which they had taken over, we should sooner or later be crushed out of existence under the roller of encroaching despotism.

Bukharin wanted us to act with greater determination. We were to snatch the initiative from the hands of the Stalin-Molotov-Kirov triumvirate. We should stimulate the younger generation of workers and peasants into a movement of opposition. We should make our *we*, and indeed our every *I*, ring louder: for were we not both citizens and masters of our own country, and the legitimate heirs of the Revolution?

To this Belinsky objected that the younger generation (which had only begun to live when the famous NEP² was introduced well after the Revolution) lacked the experience of the Revolutionary struggles as well as of either Party or public work; for this reason they found much that was baffling in the complex atmosphere of inner Party conflicts. At the same time there was the risk that a wrong approach to problems in terms of *we* and *I* might equally well lead to a domineering sort of Communism—to a boastful worship of leaders on the one hand and to ethical and political mediocrity on the other.

"Nonsense," said Bukharin. Our childhood had been spent in terrifying desolation—amid the storms of two revolutions, of civil war, of militant Communism under the hostile pressure of the Entente Powers. We were tempered by an unsurpassable experience. Our experience of politics and of life was incomparably greater than that of the youth of capitalist countries. All we had to do was to become aware of this. "You are too diffident, and too much impressed by the gentlemen of the Old Guard; you take your theories and your decisions ready-made." To bring the Revolution to its

¹ Oblomov was the hero of a novel by the nineteenth century writer Goncharov, who frittered away his talents in daydreams; and oblomovshchina means dreaming one's life away.

² Lenin's "New Economic Policy", introduced in 1921.

logical fulfilment, we must first "take stock of ourselves, make a thorough analysis of our experience, view our position with adult vision". We should test our powers and then tackle the big jobs with greater self-assurance.

The film changed, and now it was the Bukharin of 1936 that I saw before me. The moment was the drafting of the famous "Stalin Constitution", of which he in fact was the real author. This time "we" were representatives of an underground group of the younger generation, and we proposed certain amendments to him. Some he approved. Others he said lacked what was essential: due allowance for the life experience of the ordinary Soviet man and woman. If we failed to take account of this at every step, we were bound to be "tossed into the dustbin of history". We ought never to leave reality for abstract fancies. We should never assume in ourselves qualities which, by the nature of the history of the U.S.S.R., we could not have. We must, he insisted, always keep before us the fact that the workers of the Soviet Union, as no others in the world, were rich in experience, not only of enthusiasm and hope, but also of the bruises which came from contact with harsh conditions.

What he meant was that in drafting the Constitution it was not the experience of hundreds or even thousands of intellectuals that must weigh in the balance, but the experience of the millions, and the life they lived. Was not the school of life the only true university of political wisdom?

The Bukharin of the 'thirties, mark you, was a very different man from the Bukharin of the 'twenties. Younger, he had been prone to abstract theory. The older Bukharin regarded practical knowledge of life with something like awe. There was a good reason for this. We had travelled a thorny road. Our knowledge of life was so gruesome that it could not but be useful to the rest of the world. We were the children of the Revolution, the *shock-brigades* of conflicts which were to shake not only our own country but the whole world as well.

History has known many revolutions, but it is doubtful if any compare in consequences with the Communist Revolution of October, 1917. This destroyed Russian Tsarism—an elaborate structure of European and Asiatic reaction—to its very foundations. Not one stone of it remained unchanged. The Revolution implanted principles, concepts, schemes of organisation in economics, ethics, ideology, psychology, politics, which were completely new.

But today we are in the fourth decade of the process then started. Since then, over vast spaces of the largest continental empire the world has known, experiments in sociology, nationality questions

and international affairs have been proceeding on an immense scale. There have been high-soaring moments as well as moments of deep descent, triumphs and defeats, surges of enthusiasm and clouds of disillusionment. All this has found its echoes in every corner of the globe, disturbing to its very foundations the normal life of nations and peoples, and breeding among them inspired disciples as well as fanatical opponents of the Soviet system. Perhaps indeed the chief result of Stalinism in the world will be that, as no other totalitarian system did, it has transformed a scarcely visible rift in humanity into a fissure, a gulf, a division so harsh that the prolonged co-existence of the two halves now seems doubtful.

No less remarkable, however, are the results at home. The industrially backward Russia of the past has become a powerful autarchic, militaristic and industrialised country. An unprecedented form of centralised State bureaucracy has been elaborated to the last detail. The ethical and political profile of men both as individuals and as citizens has been changed to the point of unrecognisability. The spiritual life of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. has been turned upside down and no longer fits into the framework of ideas and standards which elsewhere are still customary. A flood has obliterated all landmarks.

It would be childish to imagine that all these changes have without exception been progressive or revolutionary, socialist or even communist.

The whole thing started as a hybrid, with the concept of *Soviet-skaya vlast*—"Soviet power", "Soviet régime", "Soviet authority".¹ This for the workers was to be a magic wand, healing everything it touched; but it has turned into a stout cudgel to be used on the workers' backs. Labour was liberated from the monopoly rule of private capitalism, but now lies pinioned under the crushing weight of a State-monopolistic and imperialistic capitalism. The revolutionary sword cut away the ladder of social and national castes, but other caste notions have taken their place, monstrous and unprecedented. The banners of Lenin's and Trotsky's revolutionary *dictatorship* bore the watchwords of proletarian internationalism, but today on the standard of the new *despotism* are the slogans of a nationalist and even racial megalomania denoted in the Soviet Union by the neologism *Russachestvo*. This new "Russianism" may be defined as a fusion of the old Great Russian chauvinism and Marxist-Leninist phraseology. The recent strivings to prove that all

¹ The Russian word *vlast* connotes equally the abstract conception, the resultant reality, and the means of obtaining this. Trans.

important scientific and technical discoveries have been made by Russians are merely one manifestation of *Russachestvo*.

The leading apostles of Bolshevism believed in the all-conquering power of the ideals of Marxist-Leninism; but the Stalinist oligarchy which followed them has long since taken the line of tanks, bombers and bayonets. The Revolution produced its heroes, but the Stalin Counter-Revolution annihilated them. The Revolution declared that every nation and every people had the right to determine its own fate, even to the point of secession, but today the Soviet Empire destroys whole racial groupings which refuse to be Russianised. In the war years, after 1941, Great Britain and the United States shed their blood together with the peoples of the Soviet Union in the struggle against Nazism; yet today these recent allies are declared by the Kremlin to be the despised enemies of the Soviet Union.

All this, and much else, developed before our eyes; indeed, as citizens of our mother country we inevitably participated in it all. Thus it came about that my generation of Soviet men and women, a generation which did not take a direct part in starting the earthquake of 1917, did, immediately after it, pass through a purgatory of world significance. It is a generation which has been annealed in the very heart of the political crucible of its age, and this imposes a great moral obligation on us: the obligation to inform the world fully of our grim experience. This, to be done properly, requires the very maximum of objectivity. There are facts of Soviet life which are essentially worse than any fiction about them. They require no underlining, no literary embellishment to make them startling.

Our responsibility as witnesses is the greater since we are the last survivors of immediate post-Revolution events and also since the third and fourth revolutionary generations which have taken our place in Soviet life have not the slightest possibility of learning the true history of the development of Stalinism. Men merely a little younger than myself (I am forty-four), not to speak of those much younger, have never been allowed to read the shorthand minutes of congresses and conferences of the 'twenties and 'thirties. But we grew up with them, they are part of us, we know them in their original, not their expurgated form. Younger people, with no access whatever to undoctored records of the Bolshevik movement, are completely cut off from any of the rare and pitiable survivors of the old revolutionary guard. They have only one source of "information" (and this they have to learn almost by heart), the *Short Course of the History of the All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* in its latest edition, for the re-writing of history is incessant, and earlier editions

of this forgery of history are already banned and replaced by amended later editions.

In this fantastic "History", the real founders of the Party, of the Communist Youth League, of the Soviet Armed Forces and of the Soviet State itself, are uniformly described as enemies of the working class and peasantry, as spies, saboteurs, terrorists and counter-revolutionaries!

This tissue of lies on which the new generation of Soviet people is exclusively fed, it is our sacred duty to expose. At least three-quarters of those who played an active rôle in the inner Party struggle which turned the Revolution into despotic Stalinism have been wiped out, or at least put behind barbed wire and effectively silenced; of the remaining quarter the greater part live on a sort of ticket-of-leave system, under constant surveillance by the official bureaucracy—and it must be remembered that in the Soviet Union any attempt to reconstitute the true history of even the recent past is considered a capital offence. Finally, many of those survivors who, for one reason or another, are outside the Soviet Union, lack the means, material or otherwise, to fulfil this task.

“LIBERATION” OF MY COUNTRY

“I AM a citizen of the Soviet Union forced to live in exile.”

“So you are a Russian?”

“No, I am a citizen of the Soviet Union.”

“But are not all citizens of the Soviet Union Russians?”

“No. In fact, the majority of them are not.”

This is a conversation I have often had since I have left the U.S.S.R. Let me explain.

I am an Ossetian, a member of a small nation of some 450,000 souls, itself one of a group of small nations numbering together about thirteen millions who, though they share in the general Russian culture, also largely have their own Caucasian culture which is quite distinct. I am thus a *North* Caucasian, or simply a Caucasian.

Although my mother did not learn Russian until she was grown up, I myself since early youth have spoken Russian like a Russian; in that respect I have been indistinguishable from any child of Moscow itself. Indeed, were the test the proportion of my years spent among the Russians, my knowledge of Russian mentality, history, politics, land or way of life, my devotion to the great names of Russian culture, the number of my faithful Russian friends and comrades, the strength of the bonds forged between us through all that which we have gone through and suffered, fighting for the real interest of the Russian people (particularly in the struggle against the Nazi-Fascist invaders from 1941-1945), *then* I am as Russian as any Russian and I would allow *no man* a better right to speak for the Russians.

Nevertheless, I have *my* own mother tongue, *my* own way of life, *my* own national traditions. My love and loyalty for my homeland do not conflict with my love and loyalty for the Russian people. But to ignore my distinct Caucasian nationality would be not only to ignore some essential traits of my nature, but to take part in an age-long deception.

The Russians are in fact only one of a number of nations who form the U.S.S.R., and although the Ossetians are one of the smallest of

these nations, and although we were conquered by the Tsarist generals two generations before I was born, we had never reconciled ourselves to being a vanquished people. The spirit of revolt smouldered unquenched, and it was among its unquenched embers that I was born into a family which was North Caucasian through and through and which lived and breathed the tradition of the eventual renewal of our struggle for independence.

One of my earliest memories—I can only have been two or three at the time—is of my father being taken from our home by armed Tsarist gendarmerie. There had been some kind of political unrest and a fellow Ossetian had been arrested. My father was required to give evidence against the arrested man, and when he refused he was himself sent to prison, where he was kept for some time and constantly cross-examined.

To these first memories and to the tales of past cruelty which I heard were soon to be added fresh scenes of bloodshed. They took place in those very days after the First World War when it seemed that our highlands were at last to be lit by the sunshine of freedom.¹

* * * * *

Our family were land workers. Before the Revolution my father was employed by a Cossack² farmer. We had a house with several rooms in it; our garden and orchard supplied us with our vegetables and fruit, and we had poultry and livestock for our own needs; roast chicken was a regular item of the family diet. After the Revolution we were allotted two more acres of land, but this was, of course, taken back in the collectivisation. Our family was generally respected and, though of modest means, well known for its hospitality.

I had three brothers older than myself, Dzhiba, Andrey and Savely, and a younger sister, Nina.

¹ Cf. Appendix. *N.B.*—Not to hold up my story and on the advice of my publishers, I have put the facts concerning the previous history and the character of my homeland in an Appendix rather than in this chapter. These facts, however, are of the utmost importance for the understanding of my story, as well as for the understanding of the mentality of millions of my fellow-citizens who belong to the so-called “national minorities of the U.S.S.R.” G. TOKAEV.

² The Cossacks, even though largely of Russian origin, have by their tradition of independence and by their union with other and earlier cultures in the lands in which they settled (mainly to the south and south-east of the early Russian state), long since crystallised as a separate people and indeed a nation distinct from the Russians. The Soviet régime refuses to recognise their identity, but the Cossacks have never become reconciled to the loss of their national liberties to the centralised Russian autocracy, even in its modern form.

My father, Alexander Boyevich Tokaev, was born in 1860. He was a man of complete integrity and of a remarkable steadfastness of character. No one esteemed physical labour more than he did. He had a great regard for punctuality (my mother often related how scornful he was of those who arrived late for an appointment or a friendly visit), and he was extremely accurate; he even disliked feeding the stove with logs of an unequal length and was quite capable of taking a billet outside and trimming it to size.

Coming of a fighting stock and himself a fighter, he was deeply aware of what it meant for our country to be occupied; he often reminded us that there never had been an occupying power in history that had not claimed to bring progress and civilisation to a more backward land, but that this did not mean that the enslaved peoples agreed. He was devoted to our great national poet, Kosta Hetarugov,¹ and it is still a marvel to me that, though scarcely literate, he was able to read and interpret so much of Hetarugov's work. We were all brought up on Hetarugov, whose poems are instilled with a deep love of our country and the spirit of revolt against our oppressors.

In moments of trial my father became even calmer than he was normally. Two rules which he never ceased to impress on us were: "Think before you act"; "Never bargain with your conscience." He taught us to be ready *to die rather than betray the ideal of freedom, to respect the old, to help the weak and never to deny a friend or comrade*. He regarded the exploitation of the labour of others as something shameful. He was a good husband, to us a good father.

It perhaps seems curious today that the tyranny of the Tsars (unlike some other tyrannies) at least allowed us to exist, since it was no secret that we were a family of rebels devoted to the ideal of our national liberty. My two eldest brothers grew up well schooled social democrats, burning with the belief that the Revolution would bring paradise on earth. (It is hard today to realise that, for progressive thought, the millenium then seemed close at hand.) When the time came, they fought from the outset as Red Partisans in the force of a hero whom we shall call Soslan. In 1918 they joined the newly-formed "Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)" and after the civil war, came to occupy prominent positions in the Soviet régime. My third brother Savely was fragile in health and of pronounced meekness of character; he took no part in the great battles

¹ Late nineteenth century.

of the militant period, but he too was on the side of the Revolution and became the Secretary of the Communist Youth League of our region; he died in 1927.

There is thus no question as to our attitude in regard to the Revolution. I feel no need to conceal it, but on the contrary am proud of the pro-revolutionary stand of my father and my brothers and of the revolutionary passion which I myself developed. I am proud of our attitude first because we had good reason for it, secondly because to us the Revolution meant something very different from Stalinism or even Leninism, and thirdly because a man without firm views is not a man but a kind of dummy. I have indeed no sympathy with those who were loyal Stalinists in the Soviet Union but become ardent anti-Bolsheviks the moment they "escape", and even claim never to have been on the side of the early, idealistic, social democracy.

* * * * *

Soon after the February Revolution which overthrew Tsarism, my father was elected chairman of the local Revolutionary Committee. At that time the "self-determination" of nations was much talked of, not only in revolutionary Russia, but also in capitalist America (it was implicit in President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points), and we took it for granted that the Revolution would bring us freedom from the rule of Muscovy. My father firmly believed and taught us that, though Tsarist Imperialism had needed the Caucasus, the Russian workers no more wanted to possess our land than we Caucasians wanted the tutelage of Russian governors.

My father, however, died peacefully in the following year (I was nine and he was fifty-eight), without seeing the disappointment of his hopes.

It is essential to realise that the least we expected of Kerensky's Provisional Government was a clear recognition of our national aspirations. Yet, when in due course the North Caucasians declared themselves an independent republic, there was no sign of welcome from the leaders of the February Revolution. The Kerensky group did nothing positive about this—any more than they adopted a clear and vigorous general policy which was vitally necessary to raise the country out of the chaos into which it had collapsed. That kind of mistake history does not forgive, and now the Bolsheviks had an easy victory. For, even though their party numbered less than a quarter of a million members in a country of one hundred and twenty-five million, they *did* know what they wanted. The Dictator-

ship of the Proletariat—that "handy gadget" as Lenin once called it—was scorned by Kerensky. He left it for Lenin to use.

Since Kerensky's Government disappointed them, the North Caucasians turned expectantly to its successors. If the North Caucasian Democratic Republic had come into being independently of the Bolshevik Party, its establishment did at least correspond to Bolshevik slogans: perhaps here at last was the true voice of the new Russia, the Russia of the workers who had no desire to enslave us.

The Civil War finally turned the tide of opinion in the North Caucasus. An important part of that conflict was fought out in our country. But to General Denikin the North Caucasus was merely Russian Imperial territory, and his forces swept down on it with merciless savagery. My family and our friends devoted all their energies to combating the White Guards, for these represented the evils that we knew; against the Provisional Government for the time being we took no action. But now promises were showered upon us. They came not from Kerensky and his men who, for all their tirades against Bolshevism, uttered not one word of protest against the atrocities committed in the Caucasus by Denikin in the name of the Tsar whom they had deposed, but from the Bolsheviks. Telegrams poured in from Red Moscow. The Bolshevik Party would render us every assistance to secure our national independence. The XIth Red Army under Commissar Sergo Ordzhonikidze was sent south, and Bolshevik agents spread the news of its coming, encouraging us to resist the White forces until its arrival.

We were at that time fighting not for Bolshevism against Tsarism; we were fighting the armies of the régime which had oppressed us, in the belief that the Russian working masses were coming to our help in a fraternal way, to help us to secure our real independence.

Such, however, was not the intention of the Bolsheviks. The Revolution interested them purely as a social upheaval, a class revolution in the most restricted sense, which was also a Greater Russian Revolution that would ultimately re-establish the Russian Empire under a new name. This was why, though of course we did not know it at the time, our National Liberation Movement was already regarded by the Bolsheviks as "counter-revolutionary", and they had decided to split it—just as Catherine the Great had made it her aim to prevent the unity of the North Caucasus in the interests of Greater Russia.

"On the initiative of S. M. Kirov," we read in an official history published in 1939, "the Bolsheviks decided to participate in the work of the Mozdok Congress of North Caucasians, in order to

transform this congress from an instrument of counter-revolution into an instrument of the Revolution. . . . Under Kirov's leadership the Bolshevik faction at this congress pursued the tactics of splitting the National Counter-Revolutionary Front and uniting all the revolutionary forces under the watchword of a fight for a republic of workers, peasants, Cossacks and mountain folk."

How "correct" it all sounds; and, in retrospect, how clear it is! Smash the enemies of Bolshevism, but at the same time destroy the unity of the North Caucasians and re-establish in a new form the old "Russia, single and indivisible". Bring in the Red Army, that will clinch everything. "As you were!"

It should have been clear to us at the time, but we were misled by our own fervid hopes and distracted by the gay wrapping of revolutionary slogans in which the Moscow plan was presented to us. Thus at the North Caucasian Congress held at Piatigorsk on 17th March, 1918, twenty-two were against the Bolsheviks, forty-four abstained, but two hundred and twenty voted for them. Despite much discussion, the Soviet régime in the Caucasus was first established by that vote.

The procedure now adopted was much the same as that followed by Moscow a generation later, in 1940, in the Baltic States. On Kirov's "suggestion", a first North Caucasian Soviet of People's Commissars was set up, headed by Noy Buachidze, a Georgian Bolshevik. A month later Kirov became President of the Town Council of Vladikavkaz, the North Caucasian capital, while a decree, signed jointly by Lenin and Stalin, appointed Sergo Ordzhonikidze—the same Ordzhonikidze who had led the Red Army to "assist" us against the Whites—"Supreme Commissar" of Soviet Russia for the North Caucasus.

By May, 1918, the last vestiges of an independent republic had disappeared. But this brief period had revived the sense of national North Caucasian identity which, in the past century under the domination of the Tsars, had weakened. Now there followed a new extermination of patriots.

Still worse days lay ahead. In January, 1919, the White Forces regained strength and compelled the Red Army to retreat. Again our country became the scene of White Guard outrages. At the capture of Ardonskaya my wife's uncle, Chermen Bayev, leader of the Ossetian National Revolutionary Democratic Party, was taken and, after frightful tortures, executed.

The struggle passed through my own district. The savage bands of the White General Shkuro roamed our countryside. While my

two eldest brothers were fighting as Red Partisans and my sister Nina, as is the custom of our folk, lived with my mother's sister, my mother, my ailing brother Savely and I were left in dire poverty. At one time my mother and I were arrested and held as hostages (Savely was sheltered by some neighbours); our home became a doorless, windowless shell, pillaged and desolate.

I should like to speak here with meticulous objectivity. *I do not know* how the White Guards behaved elsewhere—perhaps in some places they acted nobly as knights, or at least human beings. All I can record is that those I saw behaved like a horde of savages devoid of any ethical sense, plundering, terrorising and "punishing" wherever they went. In no sense were they even an army. I have read much about the Tsarist army and believe that there was much that was worthy of respect and praise in its history; but the White Guards I saw merely sullied its name.

They took revenge. They took revenge for our nationalist aspirations, for the coming of the Red Army, for the fall of Tsarism, for their own loss of privileges. They took revenge for it all. The population of Ekazhevskoyé and Surkhokhi in Ingushetia was completely wiped out. Scores of places in Ossetia and Kabardia were barbarously pillaged. Local Quislings appeared, betraying those who loved their country. Law and decency vanished. Women were raped, men faced firing squads, innocent civilians were subjected to all manner of degradation. Those who called themselves the White Army in fact did everything they could to make us loathe them with every fibre of our being, and to long for the Red Army.

At last the Red Army advanced again, but the fluctuations of this last embittered stage of the Civil War brought us no relief from horrors. There were new firing squads, new punitive expeditions. The whole summer of 1920 passed in this way.

But before I turn to the events which now struck at my family, I should like to give a brief outline of the outcome for the country.

* * * * *

Some three years after the establishment of the Soviet régime, the Kremlin sent us a new visitor. This was the "People's Commissar for Nationalities", J. V. Dzhugashvili, otherwise known as Stalin. He was not yet, of course, known as the All-wise or as the Father of the Peoples of the World, but his head was screwed on his shoulders well enough for him to make a declaration which was as cynically packed with false promises and hidden threats as it was remarkable for its omissions.

"My friends," said Stalin at the Congress of the Peoples of the North Caucasus held in Vladikavkaz, "the old days of Russian history, when Tsars and Generals whittled away your rights, those bad days of oppression and slavery are gone for ever. Now that authority in Russia has passed to the workers and the peasants there should no longer be any oppressed in Russia. Giving you autonomy, Russia returns to you the liberties which were stolen from you by the blood-sucking Tsars. This means that your home life should be based on your own way of life, your own standards of conduct and customs—*of course, within the framework of the common constitution of Russia*. Each single people—the Ingushes, the Ossetians, the Kabardinians, the Karachayans, the Balkarians, and any Cossacks who may remain in this autonomous area—should have its national soviet to govern its own nationality in accordance with its own way of life. At the head of these national soviets should be a Soviet of People's Commissars of the Gorskaya (Highland) Republic, to be elected by a congress of the Republic's soviets, *and in direct contact with Moscow*. Does this mean that the North Caucasian people will thereby be cut off from Russia, that Russia is abandoning them, that the Red Army will be withdrawn into Russia as some people have anxiously wondered? *No, it does not mean any of these things. . . .*"

Hitherto the Kremlin had spoken differently, but now, could we younger people but have seen it, the cat was out of the bag. In fact, Stalin was already speaking with the voice of an Alexander the Great addressing his humble subjects; Russia, it seemed, had never abandoned her authority over us and still reserved the right to give or not to give us our liberties!

There was indeed much protest against this speech. But Ordzhonikidze announced that, in the view of "the Centre", the Red flag placed in our hands "by our beloved Commissar, Comrade Stalin" should "fly at the head of your Republic *for all time*".

Thus the Gorskaya Soviet Socialist Republic of the North Caucasus was proclaimed. Alas, over 70 per cent of the delegates voted for the Stalin-Kirov-Ordzhonikidze resolution declaring our new republic to be a *part of Soviet Russia*. Perhaps, as our country was occupied by the Red Army, there was little else they could do.

Ordzhonikidze's "for all time", however, lasted barely four years. By July, 1924, the growing aspirations of the North Caucasians towards full independence resulted in a Moscow decree which abruptly terminated even their partial independence. Leading national communists were arrested; others were sent to far distant

regions of the Soviet Empire. The whole North Caucasian territory was now parcelled out, and *each parcel separately* subordinated directly to Moscow. *Divide et impera!* Tsarist policy was reborn!

At the time the significance of all this naturally escaped my own generation. On the events of these years I have thrown the light of knowledge acquired only later. I have, nevertheless, confined myself to stark objectivity. There were indeed among us men who already foresaw the consequences of these decisions. As if it were yesterday I recall the discussion among our friends when my brother returned from the Vladikavkaz Congress: they asked indignantly why Stalin had bothered to come at all, why the Bolshevik Centre had even bothered to call a Congress, so evident was it to them that the decisions had been made well in advance, not by us, but for us, in the Kremlin. But it was already too late, since our country was under military occupation.

CHILDHOOD

THE EVENTS I have described were my only schooling in my childhood, for the Civil War prevented me from going to an ordinary school. Instead of the regular life which is the proper lot of a child, I knew the cataclysmic unrest of the First World War, the social disintegration which preceded the fall of the Tsarist order, the relentless drive of the October Revolution followed by the Civil War, and the superimposing of militant Communism over an anarchy which had finally dried up the streams of normal life.

Nineteen-twenty was a year of famine. I forgot what it was like to have regular meals, even to satisfy my hunger, or to have decent clothes. Even the homeless hooligans in the big cities, the notorious *bezprizorny*, were in a better state, for they at least could rob the more fortunate, while among us there were no more fortunates left. Armies of various colours battered on the countryside. My schooling was bloodshed, degradation, violence, rape. It was not till I was twenty, that any "normal" studies began!

Children do not remember events in their orderly sequence; in my memory certain moments stand out with photographic brilliance.

There was the afternoon when I stood with some of my ragged playmates on a mountain terrace which dropped steeply away to a ravine some six hundred feet below. Suddenly we heard the sound of horses and wheels. A party of mounted soldiers appeared; behind them rattled an *arbá*—the local lightweight, two-wheeled waggon—and in the *arbá* was a prisoner. His arms were tied behind his back, and another rope passed round his neck was drawn tight to his ankles, so that he was held doubled in two. The party halted. The prisoner was dragged roughly from the waggon and placed on the edge of the precipice. Then his captors shouted at him, ordering him to confess something. He remained silent, perhaps senseless with pain and fear. They edged him nearer and nearer to the cliff. He still said nothing. At last one final thrust from a jackboot, he was over, he vanished.

I ran home in tears and told my mother. My mother too wept. We neither of us knew who had killed whom, but we both wept.



North Caucasus Types



Another memory is of a skirmish between Whites and some others. All the Whites were shot down. How none of the bullets that whistled on either side of me struck me, I do not know. It must have been near our house, for when the victorious party had disappeared I remember that my mother and I ran to the wounded commander, who lay writhing on the ground. He was past our aid: a bullet had pierced his head. "I am Belikov, I am Belikov," was all he kept on saying. As I knelt there, a thick gush of warm blood burst from his lips and splashed over me. This was all that happened, but that same night my mother and I were taken as hostages and accused of aiding the Reds to destroy the Whites. We were to say where the victorious partisans were. Ropes were strung over a beam in the stables and we were threatened with hanging. We were beaten with whips and rifle cleaning rods.

Another evening—this was in February or March, 1920—Savely and I were sitting at the gate of our yard when a horseman rode up and asked us for a drink. Before he had drained the mug of water we handed him, two others appeared. With point-blank revolver shots one killed the horse, the other the rider. The killers galloped off. That night a White Guard punitive party occupied our house. We had given a stranger a glass of water: by the civilised standards of our homeland, we should have misbehaved ourselves if we had not done so. But for this act of common decency committed by two children, the charge against our whole family was "supplying the Red forces".

Not far from our house, one night in the still hours, there was a desperate clash between Whites and Reds, with many casualties on both sides. Next day wholesale arrests began: the Reds accused us of liaison with the Whites. A day or two later there were new wholesale arrests: this time the same people were accused by the Whites of liaison with the Reds. A number were hanged, others shot; many were flung into cellars and kept as hostages. All who could slipped away from their houses under cover of darkness; this we also did, although my mother was ill at the time and Savely was ailing.

On and on we went. The weather was foul. I am not clear now where we were going, but I remember as if it were today the moment when my mother became incapable of taking another step. We were starving. In the end, good people in another village took us in. We stayed with them a fortnight. When at last we went home we found that the White General Shkuro's men had looted our house and burned our furniture. The wind howled through the broken windows; the store-room was empty.

This was the end of all our doubts and hesitations. We did not need a lecture on Marxism to know that the side Shkuro was on could never be our side.

* * * * *

It was in the early spring of 1920 that the gruesome events which took place around us brought an addition to our family, who became a beloved member of our household and remained so until her tragic death. This was another Nina (not my sister), a girl from our village whom Andrey rescued; he was with his partisan unit in the forest not far away.

Thinking of Nina, I feel tempted to tell her story in great detail, even reproducing in dialogue the actual words exchanged between her and Audrey, as we Caucasians are wont to tell events when gathered in a full family circle—at least once a year—we recall the dead, repeating conversations until by much repetition the words become memorised and known to every member of the clan. It is as if, from time to time, we draw strength for the future by re-living the drama of the past. But this is not the custom in other countries, so I shall keep to the bare facts.

It seems that Nina, who was then seventeen years old, had gone with her father to the local town. They had driven there in their *arbá*. On the way home, at a point where the road skirted a dense forest, some four miles from our village, they were set upon by armed men. The leader had long black moustaches waxed into corkscrews—by this time we all knew who it was: Denisov, a notorious freebooter from among the remnants of the White Army. Denisov ordered Nina to get down. Her father, knowing what this meant, levelled his rifle, but was shot before he could fire. Nina was dragged into the forest and raped.

It so happened that Andrey's detachment was operating near by. The shooting was heard, a scout was sent to reconnoitre; he came back and reported that Denisov and his men had attacked a passing *arbá* and had then made off to their hide-out.

Andrey's partisans went in pursuit. Throughout that night fierce fighting raged. In spite of heavy casualties, Andrey's men drove the enemy beyond their hide-out—a group of huts deep in the forest. But towards dawn another nearby party of partisans were hard pressed and sent for help, so Andrey was forced to retire. But before he left the bandits' stronghold, he found the victim. His horror may be imagined when he discovered that it was no stranger but Nina, a girl whom everybody admired, the daughter of one of the best-

known families in the village. There she lay in one of the bandits' huts, in a state of absolute apathy, incomprehensible to Andrey until he realised that she was senseless from shock.

Andrey described to me his inner struggle, when he saw the most respectable girl in our village lying there in such disorder. He was overcome by shame. She was prostrate, helpless; but dare he even touch her? Our Caucasian moral code in matters of respect for women was rigid in the extreme. But a new onslaught of the Whites decided the matter; he raised her, unresisting, over his shoulder and carried her to safety.

His detachment had to camp in the open. The cold weather was breaking; torrential rain began. Andrey wrapped Nina in his blanket and then placed his *burka* over her. A *burka* is a thick felt cloak covered with goat pelts, with stiffly padded shoulders. Draped from head to foot in his *burka*, a shepherd on the windswept mountain slopes can remain dry for hours in a heavy downpour; placed over a sleeping man it is like a small tent. As the night wore on and Andrey was drenched to the bone, he wondered if it would not be justifiable for him to creep under the *burka* beside the girl. Evidently she thought so too, for he heard her call him and ask him not to stay outside in the rain. But she addressed him formally (though he had known her all her life), only saying that they were "no longer strangers". The truth was that she was temporarily out of her mind and did not recognise him.

It was not till later that morning that she recovered her senses; then she confessed to Andrey what had happened to her. I say "confessed" because to her, sternly brought up in our tradition, the bandits' outrage was as much her shame as if she had consented to it. Did Andrey not guess what had been done to her, she asked? Yes, he said, he guessed. "And you do not despise me?" she cried, repeatedly. Had it not been for Andrey, her experience might have been fatally degrading to her, but by his unwavering persuasion he restored her confidence, and there developed between them an intimate understanding perhaps more close and intimate even than that between brother and sister.

Meanwhile the body of Nina's father was brought back to the village. Her mother, suffering from a weak heart, died of shock. This double tragedy my mother immediately accepted as her own. I was sent to the "partisan country", for, if Nina was alive, it was seemly for her to return to the village at once, to be at her parents' funeral.

I found Nina with Andrey and his detachment, halfway back from the forest, and had to tell her the terrible news of her double loss.

This new blow caused her to collapse again, and Andrey carried her in his arms the remainder of the way to our home, now to be hers. I shall never forget Andrey's expression and voice that night as we listened to Nina's delirium, and he turned to us and said: "Do you see now what all this means? This is the real face of the Counter-Revolution."

Of course, tragedies occur in normal, peace-time life, but about this disaster there was an added horror of savagery and senselessness, which in my mind inevitably became identified with the "Whites". From that evening the events we were living through were clearly divided into "Revolution" and "Counter-Revolution", as distinct in my imagination as life from death, fire from water, earth from heaven. Of course, I did not understand all that my brother was trying to tell us. Marxism, Leninism, socialism, communism, as yet meant nothing to me. But that evening was for me a kind of psychological watershed such as countless other Soviet men of my age and type knew, and I think it is impossible to understand our generation without taking this into account.

Brought up in traditional respect for honour and decency, I had received a severe shock, reinforced by Andrey's story and borne out by gentle Nina herself. During the months which she spent with us as a daughter of the house, an elder and beloved sister to me, her presence inspired me with unbelievable detestation of the immorality and barbarousness of the Whites who had outraged her. They were indeed nothing but bandits. Their *raison d'être* as an army had vanished, and the watchword "Tsarist restoration" was no longer anything but a cover for the satisfaction of their needs and lusts. To Denisov, Nina was merely ready prey, his claim to the name of "White Guard" gave his crime a deeper meaning.

In the autumn of 1920 Nina left us to train as a nurse in a hospital in Vladikavkaz (as the city was then still called). My mother, Savely and I were left alone. My real sister was still living with her aunt. During the coming winter we were to experience the brutality of Denisov and his men at first hand.

* * * * *

The North Caucasian foothills were already back in the hands of the Reds, the Whites broken into scattered bands of demoralised men pillaging the countryside off the main routes. It was a misty, cold, muddy evening when the band commanded by Denisov chose our village for its headquarters. At that time this man was about thirty years old. I remember him as a stalwart fellow, tall and dashing.

Immediately on their arrival in the village, Denisov's adjutant, Bogatyrev, was detailed to find quarters for him, the quarters to include a woman. Bogatyrev first visited a middle-aged schoolmistress, Marfa Mitrofanovna, and informed her—she was already in bed—that she was to receive Denisov. When Bogatyrev reported back I was standing nearby. Denisov asked how old the “wench” was; Bogatyrev spat, and with an oath said that she might be in her fifties. Denisov flew into a rage; I was seized and ordered to say where the nearest young woman lived, while another soldier, Oleshchuk, was sent for.

Oleshchuk was a Ukrainian who had already earned Denisov's suspicion (we learned much about him after his death). He was a quiet little fellow who, on account of his fine handwriting, was called by the others the “army professor”. Some short time before this, during a skirmish with the Reds, he had crawled into no-man's land to help a wounded man. The Reds called to him to cross over to their side, scornfully addressing him as “counter” (counter-revolutionary). Oleshchuk swore back. According to the rules he should have said that he was proud of being a counter-revolutionary. His omission brought on him Denisov's wrath, and a severe flogging. Actually, Oleshchuk was not a political thinker of any kind; his only thought was how to get back to his wife and children in the Ukraine, now deep in Red territory.

I now saw how a bandit treated one of his men. Oleshchuk, summoned before Denisov, reported illness with a blinding headache. Denisov shouted abuse at him. Oleshchuk begged him to stop. Denisov thereupon went purple with rage, leapt on Oleshchuk, threw him to the ground, and slit his throat with the man's sabre. Such was Denisov's rage that he then put the bloodstained sabre under his heel and broke it into pieces. Another soldier was ordered to get the corpse down the stairs and outside. I was made to help. I slipped and fell, the profusely bleeding body rolling on top of me.

The rest of the story concerns myself and my mother; it was another step in my initiation into life. At about midnight two girls had been at last rounded up and brought to the school for Denisov's pleasure. The whole village was by now in an uproar. My mother took me into her room and gave me my first revolutionary assignment. I was to run across the fields to the forest. Once there I was to cry “Fire” once, then twice, then three times. If I was answered with the same watchword but in the reverse order (three times, twice, once), I was to say “Fire” once again. Then a man would

come out of the forest and lead me to Andrey and I was to tell Andrey what was happening.

"Are you afraid?" my mother asked. Of course I was not. "These are terrible times," she said (I remember her exact words), "but they will make you hard and strong, and you will look life straight in the face."

I was at this time twelve years old, but as tall as many a seventeen-year-old. I was indeed already regarded as a potential breadwinner.

Alas, I mistook my direction in the dark, and blundered into one of Denisov's sentries. Other sentries challenged me. I kept running hard, repeating to myself mechanically, "I am a Caucasian." A few minutes later I was caught, lashed into a bundle with ropes, and taken to the school for interrogation. I refused to speak. It was not until morning that Denisov found out who I was. Then my mother too was arrested. We were both thrown into the school cellar, already full of hostages.

My mother now whispered to me that this was probably our end, but I must be brave, so that Andrey need not be ashamed of us. I worshipped Andrey and I remember answering her with the words of the song which the *bezprizorny* were singing at that time: "*And death will be my fate, And buried I shall be, And nobody will know Where lies the last of me.*" My mother said nothing, only cried softly and stroked my head. At last Denisov sent for her.

"Are you afraid, Mother?" I asked.

"No, son, I have done nothing wrong. I am only afraid they will take you after me."

"But I am not afraid either, Mother."

"That is not enough, son. If they question you, you must not say where Andrey is. Promise?"

"I promise, Mother," I said.

When my mother was thrown back into the cellar she was scarcely alive. She had been mercilessly beaten, but she had not spoken. My turn came next.

"Sit down, you young bandit," Denisov ordered.

Caucasian mountaineers are not a tame breed. "You are a bandit yourself," I remember saying. What was my name? Where was my mother? I made no reply.

"I suppose you have a mother?"

"Of course, all children have mothers."

"Where is your mother?" I told him that he knew that very well since he had beaten her up and had her thrown into the cellar. And where was my brother Andrey? I did not answer. It went on for

some time, then the beating began. He lashed out at me. He grabbed me by the throat and was about to bang my head against the wall when my rage overcame me and I struck out with all my might. My fist caught him in the solar plexus, and, to my mixed delight and dismay, Denisov writhed, doubled up with pain, and collapsed to the floor, his eyes closed.

It would have been easy even for me to finish him off. But I remember asking myself what would happen then. He had threatened to tie me to a horse's tail and have me dragged at a gallop over the rough countryside. If I struck him again, would not that be my fate? And what would become of my mother? In addition, with my patriarchal upbringing, I felt doubtful whether it was seemly for me to lay hands on somebody so much older. This feeling was painfully intensified when Denisov recovered and spoke.

"Damnation!" he said quite quietly. "How could you hit me so hard and in such a place? You might have killed me!" There was such pathos and injury in his voice that I felt at a loss, overcome with sympathy for him and disgust with myself. By striking my senior I had broken a fundamental Caucasian rule of decency.

At first Denisov tried to take advantage of my embarrassment to wheedle the information he wanted out of me, but at last he took up his horsewhip and now thrashed me from head to foot until I could no longer utter a cry. Then I was thrown into the cellar.

Others were similarly questioned, but in any case they did not know where Andrey was. Then there began a rigorous comb-through of every house. "In my house," a peasant named Kudzag afterwards related, "they searched every corner, then at rifle-point they drove me into the yard and held me there, while they outraged my wife, one after another. . . . She hanged herself the same day. I swear by her blood never to rest till all these Counter-Revolutionaries are destroyed." His attitude was typical.

In point of fact, Andrey at that time was no longer in the forest. He had gone to a conference of partisans at Vladikavkaz and his place had been taken by the famous leader Soslan. Soslan's detachment liberated our village and broke up Denisov's band. Denisov himself, however, escaped.

In this engagement a poor Cossack named Bondarenko was killed, which at the time grieved everybody. Bondarenko was the first of Denisov's sentries on whom Soslan's men came. Was he a bourgeois? Soslan asked. This Bondarenko vigorously denied. Why then was he with Denisov? How could he help it? Bondarenko enquired. The Tsarist régime had mobilised him, the war machine had swept

him on, and military discipline had kept him with his unit until that unit had dwindled—and deteriorated—into Denisov's band. Bondarenko now asked to be allowed to fight with Soslan's men, and he repaid the trust they placed in him. It was he who, at a critical moment, single-handed stormed the strongly-built school-house and took the enemy by surprise.

When the door of the school basement had at last been broken down, my mother and I were taken outside. We were covered with filth and blood, and even when we had been washed and attended to, our features, we were told later, were unrecognisable.

“OUR REVOLUTION”

THIS PART of my life is inextricably bound up in my memory with Nina and Andrey. During her stay with us her presence shed a gentle light over our whole household. Andrey had given up his partisan life. As the Red forces regained their hold of the country and the foundations of the Soviet régime in the Caucasus began to be laid, he took part in this work as a member of the Executive Committee of the Party, which had its seat in Vladikavkaz. No doubt his frequent visits home had a good deal to do with Nina.

I missed her bitterly when she herself went to Vladikavkaz. But I was to see her sooner than I expected. After our beating up by Denisov's men, my mother and I were bedridden for some time. Then, as I was convalescing, I caught typhus in a virulent form. I was taken to Vladikavkaz, and, when I was well enough to take notice, was enchanted to find myself in the very hospital where Nina was a nurse.

I shall never forget the weeks that followed. All the marvels of our southern mountain spring seemed to come together. The air was gay with swallows, apple tree blossom filled my window. The morning came when I got out of bed, and crept across the room to peer out at the tree. So absorbed was I in this that I did not notice Nina come in. She was by now a beautiful highland girl, with jet black plaits and a complexion like the finest marble. To me she was half-human, half-angel, her presence the sudden glory of the sun rising between our twin mountains.

Nina scolded me for being out of bed, and I promised her not to get up again without her permission. Then, with her quaint emphasis on the *o* of my name, she asked me: “Do you know, Grishko (she pronounced it not *Grishka*, as in Russian, but Grish-koh!), do you know who is coming to see you today?”

“How could I know, Nina?”

“Well, guess.”

I laughed. “I haven't any coffee-grounds to tell fortunes. All you give me is tea sweetened with saccharine.” (In the Caucasus we tell fortunes with coffee-grounds!)

She shook her finger at me. "You'll be a terror when you grow up, a real sharp-tongued grumbler." (She wasn't far wrong, Despite my father's training I have often let my tongue run away with me. Words have often to my cost flashed straight from my heart.)

Nina said: "*Your* Andrey is coming, and he is bringing an older man with him, and that must be somebody very important because I have been told to see that everything is extra spick and span, and I am especially to tidy you up."

There followed an out-of-the-ordinary washing, but my attention had been caught by the way she had said "*Your* Andrey". I had noticed for some time that while to her I was "Little Brother Grishko", and Savely just Savely, Andrey was always *my* Andrey, as though to separate him from herself. I had the impression that on this occasion she herself was aware of this and tried to hide her embarrassment. Suddenly, to my own surprise, I heard myself say: "Not just *my* Andrey but *your* Andrey, Nina."

She swung round to me with a look of fear. I believe that until that moment she had not realised that in her heart Andrey was, indeed, *her* Andrey. Now there was a loving surprised question in the glance she gave me. I was very like Andrey, and perhaps my closeness to him struck her anew. She said nothing, but, sitting down on the edge of my bed and bending slightly towards me, passed her hand gently through my hair.

I myself was overcome with emotion. I took one of her plaits, pressed it to my cheek and blurted out: "You are the wonderfulest person in the whole world, Nina darling. Mummy thinks so too, and so does Andrey. You belong to us, and we shall never give you away." She laughed, but I insisted that I had indeed heard mother say so. This was too much for poor Nina, who had suffered so much and who, without us, would have been so alone. She burst into tears and buried her face in my pillow. I sat stiff and frightened, wondering how to calm her. But she was soon in command of herself again. "Have I offended you?" I asked shyly. She shook her head, and once again lightly ran her fingers through my hair.

Just then the door of the ward opened and in came the Director of the hospital with Andrey and a stranger. This was a sturdy man of rather less than average height. He had a head of dense black hair, an eagle nose and long moustaches. He wore riding breeches, soft knee-high boots, and a khaki tunic with a broad leather officer's belt. A quick look passed between Nina and Andrey, then the Director nodded to her to leave the room.

Andrey raised me to a sitting position, greeting me tenderly. He

turned to the stranger and introduced me. It was none other than Comrade Ordzhonikidze, then the "little Lenin" of the Caucasus. This does not mean that he had already attained the great stature he was to have later, merely that he was in command of the Caucasus; it was this that made him a great figure to us. His headquarters were in Vladikavkaz and his portrait was on every wall.

I was astounded, and very frightened and shy. Ordzhonikidze was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Commissar Extraordinary for the Caucasus and Commander of the XIth Red Army. In my imagination he was therefore the personification of all wisdom, courage, power, and every kind of superhuman virtue. I think I had even fancied him to be a giant, with a head as large as the world, eyes like the Black and Caspian Seas on my schoolbook map, and eyebrows dense and bristling like the Caucasian range. In fact he was less than medium-sized! But he was Ordzhonikidze.

"Well, young hero, how are you?" he asked me, holding out his hands, a broad smile on his fleshy face. "From what I'd heard I imagined you had a long partisan's beard. . . . O yes, I've heard what you gave Denisov—Andrey told me. . . . And I have told Comrade Lenin."

"Comrade Lenin?" I was so amazed that I could hardly whisper. "Real Comrade Lenin? About me?"

Ordzhonikidze assured me that he had indeed spoken of me to "the real Comrade Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich", who was now bedridden himself and unable to take any direct part in Caucasian affairs. He turned to Andrey and the Director, and most gravely they both nodded confirmation. Now he told me that Lenin had armed us all with the finest weapons of all: ideas and ideals, theories and organisational principles, aims and responsibilities which stirred the great body of ordinary men and women to struggle. Without these things parties and countries were like trains without engine-drivers. A movement without a supreme thinker and strategist could never rise above petty propagandist work and accomplish great transformations of society, could never lift itself out of the bog of petty bourgeois notions of comfort and tackle great political problems. That was why Lenin was not only our great inspirer, but he was intimately dear to us, a hero of heroes, a leader among leaders. He was a beacon, a lighthouse, a guiding star of world revolution. He was a fearless eagle, a summit thrusting above the clouds like Elbruz and Kazbek, his thoughts were more profound than the Black Sea was deep.

"And have you heard of Marx?" he suddenly asked.

"What do you think!" I cried impatiently; they all laughed.

"And what about his beard? Do you know what that was like?"

"What was it like, Comrade Ordzhonikidze?" I asked dutifully.

He told me to call him Sergo. This had been his pre-revolutionary cover-name. He described the great beard Karl Marx had worn. "Enormous! Like a mountain!" "And how big is Lenin's beard?" I wanted to know. This started another lecture on Lenin. Lenin had a beard too, but it was not as big as Marx's. But though Marx had been his teacher, Lenin was greater than Marx. Lenin had actually taken the factories from the capitalists and the land from the land-owners; now the men who had worked the factories and the fields owned them as well as working them. Revolutionary Russia had done away with capitalism and with religion. There was no more blind belief in any mysterious power, only belief in the Revolution, in socialism, in communism, in a glorious and beautiful future, and all this was Lenin's work. Now, too, we should very soon have electrification: "Revolution plus Electrification equals Communism." (This was the first time I heard this famous slogan.) First, Ordzhonikidze said, the Soviet régime must be firmly established, and then we would have this new clean power—a new age of ease and cleanliness would begin. We should even have electric washing-machines. This idea raised a general laugh.

I laughed too and asked jokingly who would do the ironing. "I will," said Nina, who had just then returned. Seeing my flushed look she promptly ordered both the Director and Ordzhonikidze (whom, in fact, she knew quite well) out of the ward. "The Revolution likes discipline," she declared, and taking him by the arm, she led him out.

Soon after this, burning with revolutionary fervour, I left the Vladikavkaz hospital. A little later Nina left too. A great campaign of enlightenment had been started in out-of-the-way mountain villages. All who could be spared were mobilised for this work, and in this, only a few months later, she met her death.

In the remote village where she was working at the time not a single person knew how to read or write. Marxism, Leninism and all the other isms meant absolutely nothing to these people who lived a primeval life. Inspired by Ordzhonikidze, Nina put every fibre of her being into the tremendous task of telling them what had happened in the world of which they were ignorant. She organised a sort of women's club, read newspapers and books to the villagers, started an ABC class and a needlework school.

Soon the old men began to call her "daughter", the girls "sister", and the young men, of course, were ready to give their lives for her. If anything went wrong in the village they went, as they said, "to our Revolution" for advice. To tens of thousands of such folk in our region, the word "revolution" meant something totally different from what it did to the rest of the world. When these peasants—who until yesterday had lived in the Homeric age—spoke of the Revolution, they had no thought of class struggle, compulsion, force or counter-force, nor even of former division into overlords and subjects: the word merely signified what was bright, fine, beautiful, friendly, brotherly.

I heard much of this from Nina and Andrey, and indeed I saw it with my own eyes. The Revolution did wonders for ordinary men and women, though to this back-of-beyond vision of the Revolution we others added our knowledge that there were people—the Whites—who wanted to undo all the good work. At the same time to us too the Revolution was a force making for endless improvement—which after all was precisely what Lenin wanted it to be.

Nina was ideal for this work. She knew the peasantry and approached them with tact, never intruding on their ancient customs or offending their local pride. For this they loved her, because of this her end was the more terrible, not only to us but also to them.

One day she was on her way back from a visit to headquarters where she had had to report and arrange for the opening of a large school. Her cart was loaded with books and supplies. As guard and coachman she had been allotted Timur, one of the finest young men in the village. As they drove through a deep forest, in country which resembles the foothills of the Scottish highlands, they were challenged by horsemen. Timur was shot at and slightly wounded, Nina wounded more seriously. The bandits then left them and rode off, only a few moments later to reappear. Timur was made to carry Nina to level ground some distance away. Here one of the bandits clumsily stitched her gaping body wound. Timur, in his primitive way, felt this to be a dishonour to Nina; intervening, he was shot dead. These facts came to our knowledge much later through the bandit who was responsible—he was none other than Denisov!

Timur and Nina were now loaded on an *arbà* and driven to within a stone's throw of the village. For what had happened was that Denisov had shot first and only afterwards found out who his victims were, when (for reasons which have no place at this point in my story) in his rough way he tried to undo the damage.

Andrey arrived with a surgeon only two days later. But it was

too late. Blood poisoning had set in, Nina was unconscious. She died the same night.

The grief in that remote upland village was unbelievably intense. And what Nina's first tragedy had done for me, her death did for these people. Until then they had been little concerned with politics. But Nina was "their Revolution"—not an abstract political event, but a living human being who had brought them new life. It was this that the Whites had assailed.

In much the same way, throughout the North Caucasus, not only the younger generation to which I belonged, but older people too were crossing to the side of the Soviet régime, not by cold logic, but elementally and with passion. The Revolution was human reality, the essence of their own flesh and blood.

MAN BE HUMAN

IT WILL BE CLEAR that I emerged from the Civil War an uncompromising young Red. Our home was now a firm centre of Soviet loyalty. The days of struggle for mere national liberation seemed far behind us. What mattered—or seemed to matter—now was the practical social liberation which Bolshevism promised. If older men groused at our having failed to achieve full national independence, we took this as a sign of their backwardness; and if we were at all shaken we could always reassure ourselves by recalling our father's teaching that the Russian workers did not want to possess our land, and tell ourselves that now it was the workers who ruled. In the Kremlin's appeals that all were to pull together within one system centred on Moscow there was no demagoguery, but only plain logic.

My convictions were reinforced by all the circumstances of the time. To assist my mother, now ailing, I became a labourer at thirteen. The work was unbearably hard for my years. I was nearly always hungry, barefooted and ill-clad. What compensated me for my hardships, providing moral and emotional support, was the companionship of the most active boys of my age, or a little older, who were being intensively indoctrinated by the régime. In 1924, the year Lenin died, I became a Pioneer, and the year after, in what was known as the "Lenin call-up", I was admitted to the Communist Youth League or *Comsomol*. (Its official name was the All-Union Lenin Communist League of Youth.) In 1926 I began to take part in Comsomol conferences, first at county, then at provincial level, in time at regional level. In these vigorous first steps of my Party career I was greatly assisted by the official recognition of my "proletarian and revolutionary social origin".

I was also ambitious in my work, which itself was undergoing a revolutionary change. These were the years of Lenin's New Economic Policy. The relaxation of socialist control was essential to get the country on its feet industrially after the destruction of the Revolution and Civil War. While new technical personnel was being trained from among the workers and peasants, it was necessary to engage the co-operation of the non-revolutionary men these were to displace,

and in some cases even the owners of factories. The same relaxation of Bolshevik rule made possible some co-operation with the United States of America. Suddenly the shops were filled with goods and tractors appeared on fields where no such machines had ever been seen before.

When a training course for tractor drivers was started in our district, I was too young to be taken on officially as a pupil, but this did not prevent me from getting up each morning before everyone else to tend the wonderful Fordson from America, cleaning, polishing—and learning. To be a champion tractor driver, a model Pioneer, and a leading member of the League of the Godless—were ambitions integrally part of my general fervour for the Revolution.

How far away all this now seems! The ardent young revolutionary of steel muscles and raven-black hair has given place to a much sobered man, his head shot with grey. But perhaps through all these years, with their wild hopes and cruel disappointments, I have at least learned to know myself. In those days we planned, in the words of a Soviet anti-religious song, “to climb up into Heaven and drive out all the Gods.” We are all still squirming in the malodorous bogs of human existence, but I think we had to go through it all. There was no other way for us.

How was it, for instance, that I, like the whole of the Comsomol, became for a time a fanatical atheist? I came of a decent family, all of whose members were believers. My parents never questioned their faith, and I doubt if a more pious woman than my mother could be found in the whole world. What happened to me was the more strange since my elder brothers were never carried away by this atheistic delirium. What then did happen to me, and why?

I can only explain it by the fact that while it is individuals who make up the social community, this in turn produces an intangible tissue which binds all its members together and endows them with conditioned modes of feeling and thought. We are not all equally susceptible to its influence, but we cannot be wholly abstracted from our environment. If a dog is run over in the street, or if *Hamlet* is shown on the stage, some people are moved and may even burst into tears, others may remain indifferent or even be amused; yet by and large people do deplore pet dogs being run over, and they do consider *Hamlet* a great play, though at another time or in another country the general attitude towards animals may be different, or *Hamlet* out of fashion. But in each case, though some individuals are more moved than others, there is always one general, overriding, reaction.

Thus it was, in my youth, on a grandiose scale, throughout the Soviet Union. No doubt lads of my age were particularly affected by it. Andrey, for instance, who was some years older, was more objective about social facts and criticised certain aspects of the Revolution earlier than I did, even though he had welcomed the Revolution before I knew what it meant, and had fought for it as a partisan.

Looking back on that time, I observe that a first embryonic doubt was even then implanted by Andrey, however heavily it was overlaid by other influences. I say *observe* advisedly, because though I was so little conscious of it, I am convinced that I have not invented this doubt nor thought it into my past. Certain conversations stand out too clearly in my memory for them to have meant nothing to me. But certainly, dear as Andrey was to me, I did not take in much of what he said, and even rejected much of what I did take in. I even accused Andrey of being petty bourgeois and a social democrat.

I ascribed his moodiness to the loss of Nina. When she was murdered, a key string of our home life was broken and Andrey mourned her even more than the rest of us. But I see now that it was not only Nina he mourned. He was also already mourning the innocence of the Revolution. He did not formulate his views clearly to me until much later—I think it was in 1928. “All right, Grishko,” he said, “we have achieved a tremendous social revolution. We hoped to see the end of all class, social, state and other injustice. We attacked with fury because we were attacking the diseased past and still today Comrades Stalin, Rykov, Kirov and the rest insist that we should eliminate the remnants of the bourgeois classes. I am not sorry I have given my life to the triumph of the new régime, because I have made it my ideal. But isn’t it time we asked ourselves what our aim really is?” What was growing in him was not anti-communism but anti-dictatorship. He could find no justification for certain repressive measures. Even if the capitalists, Tsarist generals and priests who were repressed had been idlers, oppressors or disseminators of obscurantism, what sin had their children committed? And what sense was there in seeing counter-revolutionaries in small shopkeepers and craftsmen, in Armenian saddlers and Jewish watchmakers? “With one hand we are planting social justice,” he said, “with the other we are planting injustice.” If all Tsarist soldiers, civil servants, police, traders, and all their families, and all the members of religious orders were counted as enemies of the régime, then it meant that there were not merely hundreds of thousands, but literally millions of individuals whom the revolution had, in Dostoev-

sky's words, *insulted and injured*. How could these millions love or respect the Soviet régime? Were the Bolshevik leaders blind to the eventual fury of the resistance they were arousing? And what would the world at large think?

In respect for Andrey's memory, let me place on record that it was not till 1930 that I began to see as he had seen. And for the edification of those younger than myself let me observe that one can never properly judge any revolutionary or counter-revolutionary event immediately, especially if it is an event in which one takes part oneself in one's early youth. Time is invariably essential—time and practical experience of life, time and patient observation of the whole complex of processes in a revolution. It has certainly been my bitter experience that hasty assessments inevitably lead to harsh disillusionment.

Andrey, like many of his generation, had put great faith in the wisdom, the broad-mindedness, the subtlety of Lenin. Lenin's death was therefore felt by him as a great blow. Indeed, I shall never forget that general sense of loss, even though we younger people experienced it less directly.

Andrey and I learned of Lenin's death together, as we were on our way back from the forest to our village. We met a man who was coming from a meeting of the Godless League held at the Youth Club. He told us how in the middle of a lecture the postman had brought the news. He had suddenly appeared in the hall, grim-faced, removed his cap, and muttered: "Comrades, Lenin has just died." The lecture was immediately stopped. Not only girls, but many men, wept.

Andrey was overcome with grief. He had remained convinced that "Lenin will never let it go on." Nor was he alone in this view, though not everybody was quite sure what the "it" was. Now Lenin was gone, who could be relied upon to stop "it"? (There were, of course, those who were glad; there is no house without its throw-outs.)

When we arrived home, I remember, Andrey, a grown man of iron restraint, buried his head in a pillow and wept silently, like a child, or a girl. My mother too wept, and indeed many of us were in tears.

That evening there was a general assembly in the village hall. Everybody was there. Those who have not gone through the tension of those days cannot imagine what it was like. There was no smoking, and no conversation above a whisper. The men, contrary to custom, were bare-headed. The local party secretary opened the meeting. He was a man tempered steel-hard in the Revolution, but after a few words he too, broke down. Then my brother spoke.

It must be remembered that our Autonomous Republic still existed

at that time. Andrey said that for us North Caucasians, as for all other enslaved peoples of the world, Lenin had been a beacon of hope. Thanks to him the past was wiped out; we had our press, our literature, our schools, our courts. If in Russia proper there could still be any doubt that such a thing as Leninism existed, there could at least be no doubt of it for us. And indeed Lenin did symbolise for us the reality of the watchword "self-determination of peoples".

An old man got up. God was our witness that we grieved for Lenin, he said. But what would happen now? Who would take his place. Would the land perhaps be taken back from us?

These questions expressed the feeling of many. What interested North Caucasians after Lenin's death was not the details of some palace revolution, but solely whether he would be followed by men who were worthy of him, who would remain faithful to the principles of liberty.

In reply my brother tried to assure the meeting that Lenin's work was safe in the hands of those who had gone through the Revolution with him. Nobody would raise a hand against the North Caucasus.

Did he believe this? Or did he merely wish to believe it? One thing I am quite sure of—it never entered his mind that in a mere six months the Soviet régime would abolish the North Caucasian Republic by the simple process of a Kremlin decree. Still less could he have imagined that in another twenty years whole Republics and Autonomous Areas in the Caucasus would be wiped out—any more than he could think that he himself would be charged with counter-revolutionary intentions merely because he remained to the end of his days the revolutionary he always had been.

All this I see now. But I did not see it then. I was an unquestioning young fanatic.

A year later there was a solemn assembly to commemorate Lenin. Some fifteen of us were promoted from Pioneers to the Comsomol. We stood on the stage and our names were called out by the local party secretary. Each in turn took three steps forward and loudly took the oath. Later I was called again. Again I stepped forward, stood to attention, raised my hand as high as I possibly could, and holding my arm stiffly out to the audience, recited verses of my own composition. They began:

"In the parade of the forces of the Soviets
My tread rings out clearly. . . ."

It was January 21st, 1925, and I was rising sixteen. I felt that I was definitely on the threshold of a great future.

In the next three years I was, I think, the most active Comsomol member in the whole of our province. I wrote articles, attended conferences and congresses and was several times re-elected to the Comsomol Bureau and Trade Union Committee. I also absorbed an enormous amount of "educational" literature, and became a frequent speaker on the atheistic side in discussion and debates. I often came upon fierce opposition.

"You're talking twaddle," one illiterate peasant shouted one day. "You damned young donkey, everybody all over the world believes in God except you and a few other young hotheads."

My arguments were on the lowest level. "Well, perhaps I am talking twaddle, but you tell me what God's address is, so I can write to him."

This was meant to raise a laugh, and I was congratulated by the local Comsomol secretary, but the old peasant was not shaken. "Twaddle again, because God lives in heaven, and everybody knows that but you."

Our discussions never rose any higher. If God existed, he must have a body and it must be visible and tangible. Or somebody in the audience would argue: "Who made you?" and I would answer that the questioner (and his wife) must know who made their children, until it would come to the notorious dead-end atheistic question: "Who then created God?"

I continued in this state of mind until the end of 1926, then I suddenly ceased to make atheistic speeches and write atheistic articles. The fury seemed simply to exhaust itself. Why? The reason may interest those who wish to understand the peoples of the Soviet Union and their psychology.

After Nina's tragic death, we who had been so fond of her continued to speak of her as if she were still close to us and present among us. Her personality was so real that it remained with us as if she were alive.

One day a speaker at a "godless" meeting began to talk of death and of the immediate decay of the body, emphasising each stage of the process by which it turned into a form of natural manure, useful only to improve our fields and gardens. I knew that what he said was true so far as it went, yet somehow it excited in me the most profound disgust. I recall that when the Chairman asked me if I had anything to say—I usually had—I simply shook my head and left the hall.

It was about two months after this that I accompanied my mother to the cemetery, and cleared the deep snow off the little mound which

was so dear to us. My mother crouched, gazing at the small wooden cross, her eyes running with tears. It then somehow seemed to me that Nina herself rose out of the ground and reproached me with my godless talk, particularly for attending a meeting where the speaker declared that death was followed by nothing but putrefaction. Tears now came to my own eyes and I knelt down and kissed the ground in which she was buried. My mother stared in amazement; nor could I explain what had happened so that she could understand. But it was the end of my atheistic public work.

Then another thing affected my attitude. The Godless League started a campaign for the destruction of religious literature and ikons. Two representatives came to our house and without more ado one of them began to take down the ikons which my mother had in the corner of the room. I warned him furiously to take his hands off, and as I was by this time very solidly built and ready with my fists, he desisted. But the whole thing came up before the Comsomol. I was charged with treachery, mysticism and mumbo-jumbo worship. An explanation was demanded.

I explained that though I had been an active atheist I had never taken any part in any show of force against those who did believe. Such methods were in my opinion likely to turn from instruments of revolution into instruments of counter-revolution. As for ikons, what was sacred and precious to my mother was just as sacred and precious to myself, for such was the relationship between mother and son.

Here I should like to mention the later stages of my development in this respect. Two of my brothers, Andrey and Savely, were buried side by side, and every time, in later years, when I travelled from Moscow to the Caucasus I considered it my first duty to give some moments to them. I carried a Party ticket, I wore the uniform of an officer of the Red Army, but this did not prevent me from spending hours seated in the cemetery, silently gazing at the graves of Savely and Andrey. These meditations afforded me great moral satisfaction. I felt I was conversing with them, as if they were alive—even though I knew no less well than the little lecturer of my youth what happens to dead bodies. I remember how on one occasion when I returned to Moscow Bukharin asked me if I had “been to see Andrey”. He knew all about this “mysticism” of mine, and although he was a materialist of materialists, Bukharin approved.

Does all this mean that I now became a mystic? Not in the least. I did not start going to church and I did not reject the basic tenets of a materialistic philosophy. On the other hand, I am deeply con-

vinced that neither man as individual nor human society can exist in an atmosphere of vulgarisation of all concepts.

The Stalinists considered themselves materialists of the first water, but is there really any religious sect which bends its knee as self-negatingly as the Stalinists did to Stalin? Some people believe that universal salvation is ensured only by this or that religious dogma, others see a panacea in some social or national doctrine; still others believe in nothing but money and worldly goods (though admittedly this view is less widespread in the Soviet Union than in some other countries). Since 1930 I have found these extremes stifling. This, of course, leads to the question: where do I find sufficient air to breathe freely?

My religious principle is that *man must be a man*, he must *live up to an ideal of humanity*. I mean this in the most literal sense. I am an unshakable supporter of Rousseau's formula: *be a man, be a human being*. I am permeated with this belief to the marrow of my bones. Ethics, morality, faith, social justice and all such categories, for me proceed from *this* formula and *this alone*. Be a Russian or an Englishman, German or Chinese, white or dark skinned, the first thing to do is to *be a man*, a real human being, and to be one under all conditions. If you take down my mother's ikon and injure her feelings, you are not behaving like a man and we part company. If for your own glory or that of your social grouping you oppress others, that means that you do not behave like a man, and we part company. If you try to get material or other profit out of people, that means that you are not fit to be called a human being, and I am your enemy. Believe in Stalinism, or Nazism, or Democracy, or anything else you like; but if for the triumph of your tyranny you wipe out whole communities as the Stalinists have done in the South of the Soviet Union, that is behaving without humanity, like an animal, eating your own kind; if in the name of your Nazi "New Order" you organise death camps, there is not a trace of humanity in you and you are my enemy.

Even though I am prepared to admit that it contains certain essential contradictions, such is my faith, my ideal. If for the realisation of this ideal, I found that belief in God was necessary, I should be prepared to be a profound believer. If I found that to achieve it I had to believe in Stalinism, I should become a Stalinist. Anything likely to further the realisation of this formula: *man, be thyself*, is acceptable to me unconditionally and at any time.

Thus for instance I am convinced that not only taking human life but so-called blood sports are against my ideal, and so not only in

my ordinary life have I not killed any other man, but I have not killed any animal life or birds. On the other hand, in the War, I did all I could to bring about the defeat of the Nazi invaders, because they were enemies of my ideal.

There is one thing which I do not believe. I do not believe that there is either spiritual existence alone or material existence alone. To my mind *the two are inseparable*. We, one-time "godless", know this far better and more firmly than any narrow religious or materialistic doctrinaires. To know the taste of a fluid you have to try it, and this we certainly did, and in ample doses. Those who assert either of these extremes fill me with sheer incredulity and seem to me ludicrous. I see in such thinking a vulgar over-simplification of philosophy. Such are my views. Perhaps they may throw light on why I found the walls of Stalinism too narrow to be endured.

A BRIGAND'S REPENTANCE

I HAVE SPOKEN of my admission to the Comsomol on the first anniversary of Lenin's death; that day also witnessed my first triumph as a tractor driver.

The arrival in our district a few months earlier of a Fordson farm tractor newly imported from America had been a startling event. The elders of the village gathered round the machine. What wonders these Americans had invented! "It doesn't even need a halter, and you don't have to give it hay, only paraffin!"—"It doesn't eat hay, but it thunders along like a hundred mares!"—"Look at the smoke coming out of its rear. That's the very smell of America." What a wonderful thing was our Revolution! It was generally agreed that it would be only proper to write a letter to Comrade Stalin to say thank you, and to invite him to come down and see us sometime. Since I was known as "the most literate lad in the village" (chiefly on account of my ornate calligraphy), I was the scribe.

Some three weeks later the village was proud to receive a telegram from the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks)¹ thanking us for our letter, and assuring us that the Soviet régime and Bolshevik Party would do all in their power for the working peasantry. In conclusion, the hope was expressed that the new equipment would be mastered and used in a worthy manner.

A general meeting was then called and the proposal put before it that three young men should be appointed pupils to Comrade Kossov, the tractor driver. I was too young to be one of them, but such was my enthusiasm and so much time did I put in at the iron horse's stable, cleaning, polishing every polishable part, and greasing that little by little Kossov came to accept me as a pupil. As I have an exceptional memory, I learned the instruction book by heart; even now I could repeat it with few omissions or errors.

The final tests for the title of "tractorist" were to take place in the square in front of the Youth Club on the day of the commemoration ceremony for Lenin. To everyone's surprise, the Comsomol secre-

¹ The official name of the Party at this time.

tary announced that though I was not officially a trainee I was to be allowed to try my luck.

What an opportunity to show off! First Kossov and the engineer who had arrived from the local town examined us in theory. Of course I came out with flying colours. Then came the practical trial. *Test One*: Start up, back tractor up to threshers, hook up to threshers, and draw this to indicated position. The first candidate managed to hook up, but after a couple of yards stalled the engine and lost points; the second made a mess of backing up; the third stalled after he had changed to second gear. Then came my turn: not a hitch in backing or in hooking up; not a sound of my gears either as I reversed or as I changed up and drove round the square.

Test Two was driving the tractor without anything in tow; this we all passed. But then I started from rest again, changed up to second, to third, drove to the far end of the square, swung the tractor round and faced the crowd assembled in front of the Youth Club. All out, in top gear, I raced her forward, straight at the onlookers, closer, closer, closer—till some of the peasants must have felt like those who recently watched the British jet supersonic aircraft fly over the field at Farnborough. Kossov and the town engineer were waving at me frantically, but I paid no attention. This was *my* day. Some onlookers scattered, even Kossov stepped aside. But at the very last moment, I stopped her dead, the wheels cut deep ruts in the dry, hard-packed snow, six feet from the wall.

The reception was varied. For some I was a new dzhigit, fused into one being with my tractor just as the dzhigits of old, by their daring and skill in the saddle, became centaurs. "Look at that, my brothers," one old peasant cried, "Tokaev may be a godless young devil, but he does know how to put a snaffle on the tractor. Look at these ruts!"

Kossov was furious. "You headstrong young fool!" he shouted. "How dare you? Off that tractor, and get out of my sight for good." But as I hung my head I heard the town engineer say: "Comrade Kossov, if you ask me, that lad has the makings of a first-class tractor driver in him." And there was the old peasant again: "You're right there. There's real fire in our Gogki"—this was my Ossetian nickname—"and he has a good head on his shoulders." Gradually such criticism as there was gave way to approval. A few weeks later Kossov took me to the town, where I went through a supplementary course of training; after which I was issued with a "first-class tractorist's" papers.

I was no longer a mere casual boy labourer, but a professional

worker with a definite and very honourable status. The road before me—if I was to get anywhere—might be hard and thorny, but it was a road which inspired effort. I was proud of my position. Moreover I now really understood the value which my father had placed on regular, productive, physical work—no luxury, no wealth could give me more contentment. I was boundlessly happy, too, to be able to add my mite to the great work of building a new society. At the same time I was acutely conscious of the responsibilities placed upon me by my appointment. I was the leading tractor driver for the whole district, and this made me work as I had never worked before. I worked “like a Comsomol”. As I then understood life there was no higher standard.

I worked without a thought of the conditions, or the hours, or pay or any other consideration or right. Hours? As many hours as daylight would allow. Pay? What did pay matter so long as I kept body and soul together. Privileges? I wanted no privileges: all that interested me was getting the job done.

Indeed to this day I feel that my status as “first-class tractorist”, pioneer in introducing mechanisation to farming in my own countryside, was my most precious attainment; I cannot help valuing it above all the skill and knowledge I acquired later in such “higher” technical matters as supersonic flying. To have been one of the founders of practical mechanisation I regard as a glorious honour. I am still proud that when, ten and fifteen years later, I revisited the North Caucasus as a “big shot” and an officer of the Red Air Force my fellow Caucasians continued to know me and value me not for my rank or for any advantages my position could give them, but for “our tractorist’s” renowned ability to handle farm equipment.

* * * * *

Honest labour was one thing, however, and keeping up with the petty ritual of political orthodoxy which began to be required was another. My first brush with the petty side of Soviet reality came over none other than the bandit Denisov. Even now, six years after his murder of Nina, this man still maintained a small band in the forests on our mountain slopes. I now had a curious, indeed, a moving meeting with him.

It was in the late autumn of 1926. The sun had already set behind the mountain tops, but it was still light and I continued to draw endless furrows through the upland soil, my eyes dreamily fixed on the front off-side wheel of the tractor as it jolted loosely, the way tractor front wheels do, in the furrow drawn on the previous round.

So deep was I in my thoughts that I failed to notice the rider who, armed to the teeth, had come up with me over the soft, upturned soil. Suddenly a voice sharply ordered me to halt; now I saw him, as well as two other men who were coming up on foot, their rifles levelled at me. I pulled up, and was told to drive off across the field, following the rider; the two others stood behind me on the footboards and held their guns to my back.

I was thus piloted into the heart of a dense wood and obliged to drive the tractor into a hiding place which had obviously been prepared for it in advance. Here they tied my arms behind my back, blindfolded me, and mounted me on a horse. After riding for a good hour we halted; my arms were freed, the bandage was taken off my eyes, and I was led into a windowless wattle hut built directly against the granite cliff. What was my surprise when I saw in the light of a paraffin lamp burning in the corner that a rather handsome young woman wearing Turkish trousers was reclining on a home-made bedstead covered with rugs.

"How do you do?" she said, without attempting to move.

I asked who she was and why I had been brought there.

She laughed, rather loudly. "I was told you are called Gogki," she said, "but you don't look a bit like a Japanese."

Before I could ask what she meant, in strolled a tall man with long black corkscrew moustaches, a towel over his shoulder: Denisov! Was I dreaming? I jumped up, my heart beating furiously. If I did not immediately, on the impulse of the moment, attack him, as I had done in the schoolroom years ago, I think it was because he was so extraordinarily calm. Without a sign of emotion he offered me a stool.

"And how is your brother Andrey?" he asked.

I told him not to waste time. What was their purpose in bringing me there?

"Still full of venom, I see," was his reply. A moment later he explained. He had not brought me to his stronghold to quarrel. I was to consider myself his guest. He knew the meaning of this to a Caucasian: I must know that I was safe from all harm. The reason he had brought me here was that "in his opinion" the time had come to end our hatred and talk "on friendly terms".

"On friendly terms"—with this man who had ill-treated my mother and myself, killed Timur and Nina! I told him plainly how unthinkable it was.

"I despise you as everybody else does," I said. "You are no better than a wild beast."

Denisov, however, remained strangely calm and pensive. It gradually began to force itself on me that in the years which had passed a change had taken place in the man. This was not Denisov the wild beast, but Denisov the human being. His next words confirmed my impression. There was justice, he said, in my accusing him of being a savage; the difference from the past was that now he knew this of himself.

Then came his astonishing demand. "I want to get straight. But for this I need understanding and assistance. I am sick to death of this wild life and of living on others; I want to be a man and take a part myself in the building of the new life all around."

At first I rejected the mere idea. Denisov could not help remaining what he was, a bandit, a murderer.

"It's bad, your thinking like that," he said in a subdued voice, but without looking at me, "but I don't blame you. I have deserved every bit of it. I have burnt my own boats."

Not only what he said but the way he said it disarmed me. His transformation was clearly real. Unless the dim light in the hut deceived me, there were even tears in his eyes. "Folks have turned like wild beasts against me," he said, "but I treated them thus, so have no right to complain. I condemn myself more than anybody else does, but that is not enough for me." He wanted to redress his crimes. He wanted to feel he was a normal human being again, "at least, for once." But he had no foothold in normal life. For the last year he had made no bandit raids. With all his heart and soul he had come to loathe his old way of life. But how was he to take up decent work? Who would believe him? Who trust him? If I considered that his physical death could settle it all, I could take his sword and cut his head off now. But he thought that little good would come of that. It was as a last desperate step that he had decided, with some of his men, to ask me if I would lend a hand to an enemy I must hate. Would I or Andrey help him?

He wanted the Soviet régime to give him a chance, not to save his skin, but by his example, to teach others who were on the wrong road. If he had a guarantee that he would not be executed, he would give himself up at once. If this was out of the question, let the authorities make their own suggestion.

This talk had by now caught my imagination. I still hesitated for after all, I had no authority to treat with this bandit. In the end, we agreed that I should hand his offer to the editor of the local newspaper, and do all I could to have it published. If the newspaper then appeared with the promise of the authorities to leave Denisov his

life, he would at once surrender, together with his band.

I learned to my surprise that for over a year his men had been split into two parties, one of which continued to raid the countryside, while his own section had not only refrained from banditry, but had tried to protect their district against the bandits. Certainly, for example, three months ago a farmer's horses had been stolen by raiders, but at night brought back: nobody realised that this was Denisov's work! Denisov, in fact, had now come to recognise the Soviet régime and was quietly assisting it on his own initiative!

Of course, I was not without serious misgivings; I told Denisov openly that I found it scarcely possible to trust his words. His reply, engraved in my memory, was: "Let me tell you, Grigory Alexandrovich. A lifetime's experience has taught me that the word of honour of a bandit is tougher than steel; if a decent bandit promises anything, he will keep his promise. Unfortunately this cannot be said of many a law-abiding politician."

I rejected this as absurd, because I then thought it was ridiculous to speak of a bandit's decency or reliability.

"Decency and reliability are two very different things," Denisov said. "The world is full of decent people who are unreliable and of reliable people who are not decent. A bandit's decency consists in being fair both to himself and to his enemies. He does not try to conceal his hatred and there is often not a trace of double dealing in him. Besides," he said, "a bandit values his word because it might cost him his life, whereas politicians, who are always on the right side of the law, hold it less sacred because they risk very little."

All this I found very novel and surprising, but Denisov was as impressive in his conversion as he had been when he was a menace to society. He assured me that the greatest of criminals were capable of realising how wrong their life had been and of giving it up, moved by profound impulses of goodness. One could not fully grasp how criminal an act was unless it was one's own act—I strongly disagreed with this. It all puzzled me greatly. He said he knew perfectly well that the authorities would not easily forgive him. But he felt that he had an ethical *right* to demand an opportunity of proving to others how mistaken they would be in following his criminal example. He said that he was convinced that he had the right to count on me and Andrey for assistance just *because* we were personally his enemies.

I must admit that I saw a kind of logic in this apparent nonsense. Of course, it was open to me to preserve the spotless purity of my Comsomol robes and refuse to have any further dealings with the man. But would that be right? In the end, the authorities would

catch him and shoot him. But, since he had already given up being a bandit, what advantage would that be to the Soviet régime?

And then I began to see another thing. If the U.S.S.R. claimed to be an entirely new social system, better than any before it (as of course it did) was it not its duty to produce entirely new methods for the solution of social and psychological problems? Was not revenge part of the slave's outlook? And what was capital punishment other than the satisfaction of the ancient instinct of blood revenge, even though theoretically the emotional element had been taken out of it? Did not the incidence of death sentences merely measure the degree of cowardice and weakness of the ruling system? Certainly it was not a proof of its humanity, but something ignoble and cheap. And what sort of socialism would ours be if it did not have humanity? Thus I argued in my mind that the Soviet régime should not follow that shameful road, but should show itself powerful, perfect, proud, advanced, and, of course, profoundly sensitive psychologically. What deep significance it might have if we acceded to Denisov's request! What an impression it would make throughout the world!

When I finally agreed, I saw that Denisov was very moved, and, for the first time, a natural, contented smile came to his lips. He went to the corner of the hut and took two pistols out of a trunk. Unloading them, he asked me to accept them as presents, one for myself and one for Andrey. "We have fought each other, arms in hand, let these weapons be a sign that we have made peace."

This again confused me, but I decided to accept. Once again I was blindfolded, and then taken back to my tractor.

When the sun came up the next morning, I was ploughing again. The tractor purred sweetly, the soft soil turned easily, but Tractorist Tokaev was uneasy. I had the impression of dozens of bandits' eyes watching me from the forest. I was sick at heart with false shame. What would the authorities say? Would I not be accused of deliberate connivance with the enemies of the régime? I could bear the tension no longer. I raised the plough-shares, gathered up my things and drove down to the village. Without a word to anyone, I went to the local town.

The editor of the newspaper *Vlast Truda* (The Rule of Labour) was a dry little man with no soul, all orthodoxy, his mind stuffed with formal bureaucratic "truths" and "rrrevolutionary spirrrrit"—anything else was "White Guardism".

"You are a damned traitor!" he rapped out when I concluded my story. "You have sold yourself to the White Guard counter-revolution, you have made friends with the enemies of the proletariat.

Shooting's too good for you." He immediately telephoned to the duty officer of the local CHEKA,¹ Comrade Migulin, and told him that there was, sitting in his office, a young fellow whom the CHEKA would find most interesting. Would they come and collect him.

There was no point in arguing or in leaving the office. I was well known as a frequent contributor to the paper. In any case, I was not one to flinch from responsibility. Nor had I made this visit with my eyes shut. I was curious to know the reaction of the Soviet official mind. The "Chekists" soon came and took me off with them. They cross-examined me without any of the tortures or "scientific methods" of which professional anti-Soviet writers abroad have told such alarming stories. I told them all I knew, and emphasised that, whatever was decided, there was need for caution, not to scare the bandits away.

Unfortunately the authorities took no notice of my advice. A punitive force of the Workers' and Peasants' Militia and a company of the Red Army surrounded the forest and began to comb it through. The bandits' base was found. The Commanding Officer ordered me to walk to Denisov's hut, without trying to conceal myself, and call on him to surrender. I did this, but there was no answer. I entered the hut. It was empty. I went behind it. Immediately a rifle bullet whistled down over my head. I took cover against a tree; more shots followed and the chief of staff of the detachment was killed and a Red Army man wounded. Dead silence followed. At last we advanced, to find nobody, only deserted huts.

While this was going on, the handful of men left at Police headquarters received a rude shock. A band of fierce men accompanied by one young woman suddenly appeared and demanded the officer in charge. It was Denisov, his mistress and his men, surrendering.

During the trial Denisov laughed heartily about this episode. With superb scorn, he said that of course he had known all about the detachment coming to capture him. He had watched it advancing and could easily have killed me with the first bullet, but was not yet sure of our intentions. After that, he and his men had fired solely to cover their escape: passing through our "encirclement" they made their way to the village, to surrender freely. It had been a mistake to come to "capture" a man who wanted to surrender; it only caused trouble.

He was at pains to emphasise the perfection of the bandits' tech-

¹ CHEKA, one of the first words to be formed in the modern style from initials, stood for the Russian words for Extraordinary Commission, as the Soviet Secret Police were first called. Trans.

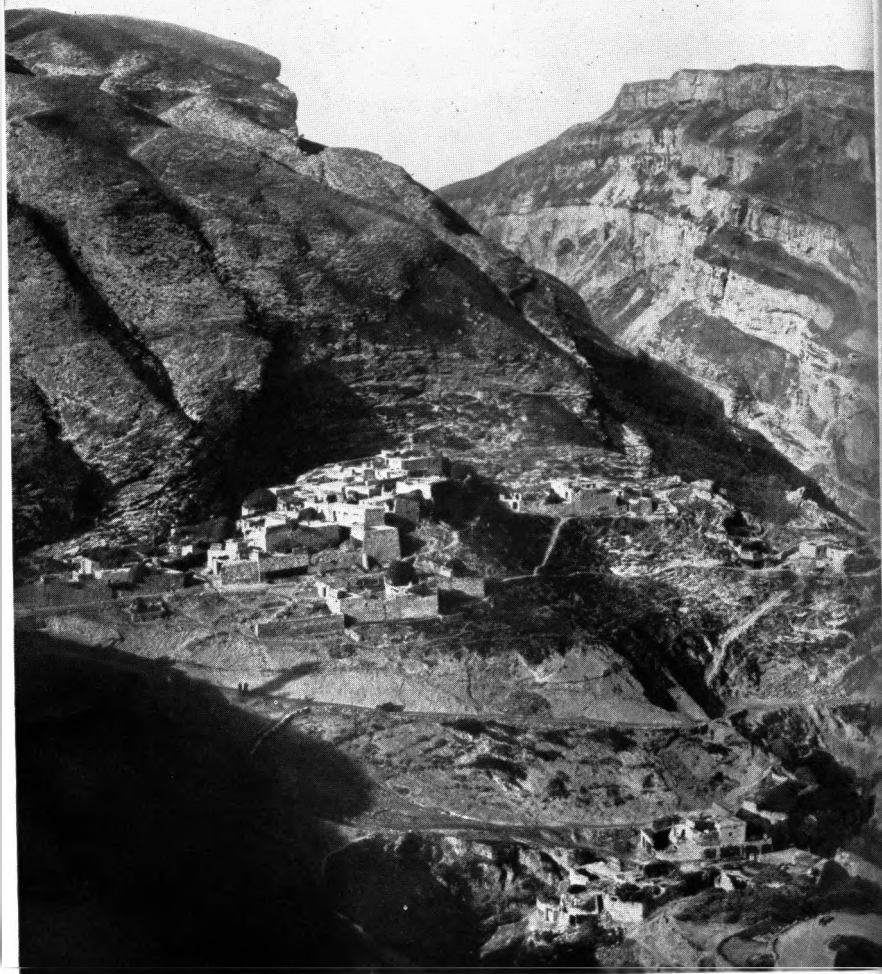
nique in moving through the forest. For instance, years ago, when Andrey had saved Nina, Denisov had watched him from within a stone's throw. He could easily have shot him, but he liked to decide freely for himself what he would do. When the Chairman asked him why he had not killed Andrey, he said: "I have a great love for brave men. Such enemies I have never killed."

Denisov's last words were in keeping with what he had told me. "I have concluded," he said, "the account of my disgusting crimes, and I accept the fullest responsibility. I am ready to pay, what is more I want to. But I am afraid that there is nothing which can redeem even a part of what I have done. Hanging, or shooting, or the block would only be a trifling punishment. For this reason I advise the Court to sentence me for life, so that I may teach others how and why not to follow my road."

There was indignation in the Court. The Chairman said scornfully that Soviet citizens did not need Denisov to tell them not to follow the road of banditry.

Denisov replied: "All the same, may I say that for me condemnation to live would be the most severe punishment. . . . I should like my life from now on to be a moral torture. I should like to give lectures, and write articles and books about the one simple truth: that it is far easier to quit this life than to return to take one's place in it."

From the front row of the public benches my brother and I watched and listened. We were both convinced that Denisov's position could only be reached by one whose whole being had, somehow, been essentially transformed and acquired a new quality. It would have been interesting to see the man under different conditions, but that alas, did not depend on us. The Soviet authorities had no really new notions about tackling crime or punishing guilt, and Denisov went before a firing squad.



North Caucasian Village

ONE MAN STRIKE

SOCIAL INJUSTICE? Could there be such a thing in the republic of workers and peasants? Until 1927 the possibility had never occurred to me, for neither the incident over my mother's ikons nor the outcome of Denisov's case—though this did make me wonder at the lack of imagination of the authorities—were identified in my mind with the question of social justice. I was possessed with the blind fanaticism which only youth knows, and though I was not quite deaf to Andrey's warnings, my ears were still not attuned to heed them. My own critical faculty was quite undeveloped.

But now gradually I was acquiring a little experience of life; at the same time I was steadily reading through the prime sources of Marxism and Leninism and my horizon was widening. That objectivity which enables a man to stand on his own feet and take a decision which is wholly individual was still far off, but my growing ability to look at my own side without rose-tinted spectacles was enough to bring me for the first time into serious conflict with the authoritarian element in Soviet life—that element which makes principles and ideals count for less than dogmas and formulas.

I had now been an organised worker for five years—three years as a labourer and two years as a skilled mechanic. I was not only a veteran Comsomol and a Trade Union member, I had been for so long and so actively a member of the local Comsomol "Bureau" and of the local Trade Union Council that it was almost automatic for me to be chosen to represent these bodies at regional congresses. I contributed to newspapers. I looked much older than my eighteen years, and I was no longer a mere village lad. I got about and met people of wider experience, coming from other places and from different walks of life.

However, I was still a single-minded young hothead, giving his all for the cause and unsparing of effort and sacrifice—as befitted a Comsomol. But gradually I came to observe that because I was ready to work first and ask for my dues only afterwards—or not at all—I got extraordinarily little, while other people who seemed to do less were materially a great deal better off. Thus, for instance, whilst they

were decently clothed, I had never been issued even my regulation boiler suit. So, too, with many other things to which I was entitled. What also struck me was that those who did get the material benefits were often those who were much better at shouting than at working: they were the fellows who at public meetings and in newspaper articles spent themselves not on attention to practical matters but on fine phrases about our "glorious future" and clarion calls for greater effort from "the comrades". I was one of the comrades providing the greater effort and the result was that I went about dressed like a tramp, without a proper home or decent, regular food.

Polite reminders to the authorities had no effect, and suddenly my hot enthusiasm did an about turn—from ploughing to striking. I was a key man and it was harvest time. I set about a one-man strike as thoroughly and practically as I did about ploughing. It was not enough to down tools and let somebody else take over—and perhaps damage the tractor: so I removed certain key parts and only then refused to work until the standard agreed conditions of labour had been observed.

My strike was like an atom bomb. For a while I had the Party and Comsomol secretaries and the Chairman of the Trade Union purring round me, imploring me to resume work. But this I refused to do. Threshing and storing of grain ceased, and so did the night shift work at our village mill.

Now the storm broke. I was brought before the Comsomol first for an official enquiry, then for a reprimand, and finally for "preparation of social opinion" and "civil punishment".

The whole world now, I imagine, has some idea of the nature of these constant enquiries by Soviet "Party Courts", though perhaps it is not realised either that they often deal with very minor matters or that they began to exist very early in the life of the Soviet Union. One of their principal features is that the "loyal" members of the Party or Comsomol assemble as a mass court and make speeches, often of inordinate length and invariably full of passion and prejudice, striving to magnify the known—or alleged—acts of the defendant into deliberate crimes against the régime.

In my case one orator argued that my strike proved me to be a Trotskyist saboteur deserving of the most severe penalties of the proletarian State; another that my real intention was to ruin the harvest and thereby condemn the Red Army to starvation—as if all the Red Army supplies depended on my tractor! The Chairman of the Trade Union brandished clenched fists and recalled that in 1917 we had destroyed all exploiters and ended exploitation for good, it

was therefore criminal of Tokaev even to suggest that exploitation existed in the Soviet Union. How could Tokaev forget that we were working to free the workers of the world from capitalist slavery, from starvation and from the rule of the rubber truncheon which existed elsewhere? Tokaev's strike was nothing short of counter-revolution: the scoundrel claimed that he was striking to improve his own position—he was not, he was striking against the proletariat of the world.

And so it went on. The Comsomol secretary, in a very long speech, said that between my activities and those of the White Guard there was only a difference of method, not of essence. The White Guard fought the Soviet régime with bayonets, Tokaev by interrupting the harvest. "We will not put up with it! We will offer revolutionary resistance! What a disgrace that, merely over a question of wages, a Comsomol should hold up work!"

Not one man spoke in my favour, many spoke against me. I was then given the chance to speak for myself, but I refused, because, as I held, I was not in conflict with the Comsomol. My refusal was, of course, taken as further proof of my turpitude and I was thereupon expelled from the Comsomol. A day or two later I was similarly expelled from the Trade Union and before the week was out I had also lost my job.

Here I was, at eighteen, out of work and a pariah. This was the Revolution's reward for my fire and enthusiasm. What was my reaction? Certainly not to lose faith in the régime or to cease to worship the very principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For me, it was not the system that was wrong, but only certain individuals. Disregard for a man's rights might exist, I felt sure, in England or America, but never in the U.S.S.R. I decided to go to the local town to seek fair treatment; I was sure I would get it.

The first person I called on was Kossov—the man who had first taught me to handle a tractor. He was away but his wife, Tatyana Sergeyevna, was at home. She was as kind to me as a mother. She heard my story. Then she said something very strange, something that flabbergasted and indeed outraged me. She declared that *we could make a thousand revolutions, if we liked, in Russia, and things would still be just the same.*

This simply staggered me, particularly since she was Kossov's wife and a woman of simple origin, who could hardly read or write and had never dabbled in politics, a woman whose essential loyalty to the Soviet cause I could no more question than that of her husband. Frequently in life one may see a statement many times in

print, but be really impressed by it only when one hears it direct from the lips of an unsophisticated person. Then it can turn one's soul inside out.

"But . . . why . . . why do you think that?" I asked her.

"Oh, I don't quite know," she said. "Perhaps because we have such a large number of swine among us."

"But whatever do you mean? Who are the swine?"

"Comrade Stalin himself, if you like," she said, quite simply and coldly, but horribly persuasively.

"Shhh! Tatyana Sergeyevna!" I cried.

"Well, you've had your *shhh*! haven't you? Tell me, do you think it right to turn a worker out into the street without a penny?"

"Tatyana Sergeyevna," I remember answering her priggishly, "it is never Comrade Stalin who is to blame."

"Who on earth is it, then?" she demanded, and her voice hardened.

"Like parson, like parish, they used to say. If he wants to be the leader why doesn't he see that things are run decently?"

The words of that remarkable and brave woman often come to my mind. We had emerged from serfdom and the black oppression of Nicholas I, the crash of the Russo-Japanese War, the Bloody Sunday of 22nd January, the 1905 Revolution, the Lena Goldfields slaughter of 1912, the Civil War and militant communism; throughout all these misfortunes we had aspired to improve the lot of men, yet even to this day, the value of a man's life in the U.S.S.R. has not risen by a brass farthing. We have produced many slogans of the rights of man, but we have produced no rights of the actual individual.

Some explain this paradox by the Russian national character, others by the influence of wars and revolutions destructive of finer feelings; still others think that our revolutions have been untimely. Kossov's wife offered me yet another explanation: "They say there are one hundred and fifty million people in the Soviet Union: how can you expect the authorities to be concerned with a single life? If our population was only two million, they would behave differently." It was a simple formulation but a penetrating one; it recalls Rousseau's suggestion that the freedom of the individual is in inverse proportion to the size of his country. There may be something in it: perhaps the Soviet Union is too big as a single State unit?

It may also well be that there is a grain of truth in each of these explanations, but I should like to add yet a further consideration: the nature of Soviet State theory. The Stalinist system of centralised State monopoly rejects by its very essence the notion of the individual

as a self-organising unit: the individual has value solely in so far as he is part of a collectivised grouping—in my case at that time of the Comsomol and the Trade Union. Outside such groupings a man is *automatically* denuded of all value. The effect of my new status as an outcast on other individuals at the time illustrates this.

The next place I called at was the Provincial Headquarters of the Comsomol, where I saw Perventzev, himself a worker's son and so far one of my best friends. We had known each other for many years. He was very glad to see me.

"Come in, sit down, Grisha. What's the news?"

I answered him, of course, in the same warm friendly tone. "Pretty poor news," I told him.

"Oh? What's the trouble? You've not been knocking it back too much?" he laughed; he knew I never drank. Then if it wasn't that, had I got a girl into trouble? Another Comsomol member, perhaps? No? Then there couldn't be any bad news.

"Petya," I said, "I have been expelled from the Comsomol and from the Trade Union, *and* given the sack from my job".

His first reaction was not one of horror or indignation. It was a *reaction of fright*. Without a word, he pointed at me, his eyes questioning me—was I serious? I assured him that I was. "What for?" "For sabotage, Trotskyism and counter-revolution!" I smiled at the absurdity of it, but not so Perventzev. He started back as though I had pulled a gun on him. His mouth twisted up with distaste and hostility. "You?" he said. "You a Trotskyist, a saboteur, a counter-revolutionary?"

"No, of course not! Nothing of the sort!"

"If you have been expelled for these things," he said in a hard voice, "it means that you are."

"Do you mean to say that you approve of my being expelled without even knowing what happened?"

Instead of answering he accused me of hypocrisy. It was the action of a scoundrel, he said, to come to his office and sit down as if I were a friend, without announcing at once that I was—a Trotskyist, a saboteur. . . . I might have been a leper in the Middle Ages who had failed to ring his bell. "But at least hear my side, Petya . . ."

No! Why had I come to the Provincial Headquarters at all? His voice and manner were now those of a total stranger. I was not Grisha any more, I was "Comrade Tokaev". To hear this from the lips of a man as close to me as Perventzev had cut me to the quick.

I was not in those days trained in self-control; I brought down my fist with all my might on his desk and let fly a broadside of oaths.

He answered in kind. But he was able to add more. In the eyes of the Provincial Committee, he shouted at me, the opinion of the "Comsomol collective" outweighed anything I could say a million times. To my observation that even a "collective" could make a mistake, he bellowed that neither Party nor Comsomol bodies ever made mistakes; moreover, they alone had the right to decide what was to be the official opinion regarding any individual member. "But if that member is not at fault?" I demanded, with another indignant bang on his desk. "The mere fact that you are expelled means that you are at fault," was his reply.

Even I sensed that his words had a significance far beyond the immediate circumstances, but I was far from grasping what I understood later—that this was not the excessive zeal of one mistaken official but the very essence of the new order. Tyranny had not been overthrown because tyranny itself was hateful; Bolshevism had not struck a blow for the individual, but a blow *at* him; tyranny had merely been transferred to this new "collective" mind—if it could be called a mind.

Of course, I still knew that I was in no way at fault. I had not the slightest notion of how to be a Trotskyist and nobody was further from counter-revolutionary intentions than myself. Consequently I next went to the Provincial Trade Union Council.

Here I was seen by a dry little man of about forty-five, in horn-rimmed spectacles, smelling of a mixture of rape-seed and barber's eau-de-cologne. He received me cheerfully, and enquired my business. I told him. His face flushed and he felt under his collar. What was I doing there? he asked with an expression of disgust and fear. Did I not know that my sort were dealt with in another office, that of the political police? He ordered me out. I was not even "Comrade" but "Citizen" Tokaev—nothing could be more indicative of my being outside the pale of the community. Before I could argue, he stood up, pointed at the door and waited for me to leave.

I remember dragging my feet through the streets, kicking viciously at the cobbles, till I came to the bridge over the Terek, that broad mountain torrent of which Lermontov had sung. I looked down into its clear rushing waters. Swiftly they made their way towards the distant blue sea, where there was so much space and peace, while we miserable little beings hit and slandered one another, fouling up our lives from the crudest and most crass of utilitarian motives.

To my mind came the words of a revolutionary song which had inspired my childhood: "*Bravely into battle go, For the Régime of*

the Soviets, In the fight for this to die." Ah, but what was "this" for which we were to die? I recalled another hymn which had nourished my faith: "*Arise, branded by a curse, All the world of the starving and the slaves . . . We shall build our world, a new world, He who was nothing shall be everything.*" Indeed, we had "arisen", Andrey and I, to build that new world in which "*he who was nothing should be everything*". And now what were we? Branded men. My brother had been stigmatised as a "Trotskyist" and "bourgeois nationalist". Now I myself had been kicked out like a mongrel dog.

I was in an extreme state of embitterment. But *not*—let me be quite clear about this—*not against the Soviet régime. Not against the dictatorship of the proletariat.* Far from this. I was convinced that it would be wrong to generalise from these few petty and perhaps inevitable local phenomena.

In this mood I went back to the Kossovs. Two days later Kossov came back from his official tour. We sat talking late into the night. I do not know who had most to say, but we both agreed that in the North Caucasus the real organisers of the Revolution were being displaced by new officials of doubtful quality. On office walls the portraits of Lenin, Zinovyev, Kamenev and others like them were crowded out by countless portraits of Stalin, Molotov and Kirov. The lot of the real workers was getting harder; extreme measures were being taken against the peasantry.

Next day Kossov took me to see the First Secretary of the Provincial Party Headquarters. This was a very old personal friend of his. They had been in the Party together since 1914, and were both typical of the "old guard". To our complaints the Secretary answered with his own: a soulless bureaucracy, he said, had gained key positions in every public body and it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to do his work. Nevertheless he was still the First Secretary—the chief controller of the affairs of the Province; only the Central Committee in Moscow could remove him. So now he took up the telephone and gave the Secretary of the Comsomol Provincial Headquarters ten minutes of his tongue ("bargee" language was still in those days the mark of the revolutionary spirit and proletarian reliability). He insisted that my case should be looked into immediately. In the same style he telephoned the Provincial Secretary of the Trade Union, instructing him to reprimand the gentleman in spectacles.

Here was the magic lever—it is available to this day—which could set the whole machine in motion. Very soon the "Tokaev case" was over and, though unable to return to my job, I was back in my

membership both of the Comsomol and the Union. In my absence another driver had been given the tractor to use and had hopelessly damaged it. The tractor was sent to the refitting station and I followed it there to work as a fitter. It was not till some months later that necessary spares were obtained and the precious iron horse was on the road again. By that time I was in the midst of a new political maelstrom.

* * * * *

Early in 1928 the Central Committee of the Party decided to banish Trotsky from the U.S.S.R. Over Stalin's signature instructions went to all parts of the Union calling for demonstrations in support of the decision. We too in the North Caucasus demonstrated. There were endless compulsory marches of "spontaneous" demonstrators, over whom waved a regular forest of flags, pennants, banners, portraits and caricatures. The procession tramped past the building of the Provincial Party Headquarters. Here the right slogans were chanted: "Down with Trotsky!", "Long live our leader, Comrade Stalin!", and there were bursts of cheering. But, just as my group were passing under the balcony of the Headquarters a voice quite close to me shouted: "Long live Comrade Trotsky, leader of the World Proletariat." A scattered "Hurrah" followed and the procession was thrown into confusion.

I neither shouted nor cheered. I merely watched the ultra-Stalinists and the Trotskyists come to grips. The Trotskyists were in a minority, but there were bloody faces and torn clothes before the police broke up the fight and swept some fifteen people into the prison courtyard. I was among them!

We were cross-examined in alphabetical order. I insisted truculently on my rights as an individual, and so exasperated the magistrate that he shouted at me that it was obvious from my florid handwriting that I was a Trotskyist. Very well, I asked, if that was so, why need he examine me? If he wanted to pursue a real political enquiry, let him look into my known political convictions.

He then spoke to me calmly, but still assuring me that all I said proved I was a Trotskyist. He fully understood me: "My leader", Trotsky, was being banished and sent to "our" masters, the capitalists of the world, so naturally we were all very disturbed and in a state of high tension. This tried my patience beyond what were then its limits. I shouted at him to go to hell with his fantastic arguments. He too lost his control. "You Trotskyists," he cried, "want ploughing in. What we can't get into your thick skulls should be stuffed into your . . ." This indecency I took as an insult not only

to myself but to the ideals of the régime in which I so passionately believed, and I fired a volley of extremely strong expressions at this man who was a magistrate and three times my age. To this day I cannot forgive myself for this folly.

I remember how he rose from his chair and paced the room, deep in thought. Then he turned to me and delivered a lecture, not on Trotskyism but on manners. Coarseness and hooliganism of this sort merely debased a man. I, a young Comsomol, had used the foulest language to him, a man getting on in years, a magistrate who was doing his duty, a Party member since 1917, who had been a prisoner of the Tsarist régime released by the Revolution. He would not continue the enquiry: I could walk out and everyone would know that he refused even to examine me.

I now made some effort to convince him that it was not I who had shouted the Trotskyist slogan, and in fact I succeeded. He was very human. Later on he himself was to go to Siberia for *his* own Trotskyism! I met him when he returned to Moscow in 1932 and we became fast friends, but in 1935 he was again arrested; since then his fate is unknown to me.

I have often asked myself what exactly was my attitude to Trotsky at this time. I was certainly opposed to him. Trotsky's conception of the Revolution had never been mine. For in my view Trotskyism could be summed up as a belief in a system of *imperialist-revolutionary dictatorship*. It was in fact a doctrine of one-party tyranny based on a concentration of forces along imperialist lines. *In this respect it was indistinguishable from Stalinism*. Viewed from another aspect it was neither more nor less than a revival of the tradition of territorial expansion of the Russian Tsars, only under a new banner. One distinction, however, between Trotskyism and Stalinism was that on the nationalities question Trotsky was even more reactionary. How could I possibly be thought to have subscribed to such a view, when the very springboard from which I and my family had leapt into the revolutionary stream was the national aspiration of the North Caucasian peoples!

But the accusation of being a Trotskyist at this time is interesting. The practice had already begun of identifying any kind of independent thinking with an extremist form of opposition to the régime. While freedom of discussion was a slogan, in practice any dissident opinion was treated as heresy. I was being treated as a delinquent without even having expressed any dissent.

It was only later, however, that I came to see this development as significant. At the time I was still wholly *inside* the Soviet process,

and though its workings filled me with indignation, I continued to ascribe them to the mistaken zeal of individual officials and failed to understand them for what they were.

VISITORS FROM MOSCOW

THE FOLLOWING summer there was a drought and the harvest had to be speeded up for fear of the grain shelling out. Town workers were organised into shock brigades to help the peasants. Thus, although I was still working as a fitter, I was given a brand new Fordson and self-binder and sent to a remote village.

One day, returning from the fields, I was overtaken by a chauffeur-driven car in which there were a man of about sixty, a rather younger woman still good-looking though running to fat, and a girl of about eighteen. They signalled to me to stop. "Hi, there, smut-face," the chauffeur called out, "come over here".

"We say Hi! to pigs," I replied. All the same I went across to see if they needed help. Politeness to strangers was an unwritten law in the Caucasus.

"You speak Russian, then?" The chauffeur seemed surprised.

"Why not? You speak it, why shouldn't I?"

"Are you a native or a Russian?"

"I don't understand your question, Comrade Chauffeur," I said.

"I happen to be a citizen of the Soviet Union. What can I do for you?"

I saw the older people exchange a glance. The girl burst out laughing and muffled her face in her handkerchief.

"That was a proper answer, Comrade Tractorist," said the older man. "Don't take any notice of that numskull. Can you put us on our road, please? We have been going round in circles and are hopelessly lost." They were from Moscow "on leave", and well off their road.

I explained that they had a choice between a dangerous short-cut, and a safe but much longer way round. As the sun was already low in the sky they reluctantly took the short cut. I took hold of my starting handle, then on an impulse looked back. My glance met that of the girl who nodded to me in a friendly way; I waved my hand and she waved back.

When, not long after, the sun dipped behind the mountains, I suddenly felt uneasy. How did I know if the driver was really good

enough or his brakes in order? At last I unhooked my binder and drove off quickly to catch them up. Soon I saw them, stuck at the foot of an abrupt descent where there was a primitive bridge placed at an awkward angle with another hill rising steeply beyond it. I dabbed my accelerator several times to make the engine backfire on its thin mixture: I wanted to warn them to wait for me. Then down towards them I plunged, at top speed, although there was barely room for my wide tracks, and the road fell sharply away on my right.

They were surrounded by people from the village, and the miller had brought out four stout planks which were always used when a car or heavy vehicle needed to cross the bridge—it consisted merely of tree trunks with brushwood spread over them. With his help I crossed, and went over to the car. The chauffeur cursed me for sending him on so dangerous a route; he even threatened me with his starting handle, but I flung him back against the cliff face. "Bravo!" cried the girl, close to my ear. I turned. She made a comical face at me as though to say, "Good for you!"

Her father now explained very politely that they had tried to get up the hill but had skidded and all but plunged into the raging torrent below. Indeed the back wheel of the car was only an inch or two from the vertical drop; the least clumsiness in handling would send that car over the edge. Nor could it be pulled up by tractor, for it was blocking the road.

It did not take me long to make up my mind, though the villagers stared and the Moscow girl held her hands to her cheeks in alarm. While some of the men leaned against the car to steady it, I took the wheel and cautiously, inch by inch, drove it into a safer position; then I got it off the road, drove my tractor past it, found a chain and took it in tow, ordering the chauffeur to steer it.

Unfortunately, when we were almost at the top, he braked sharply and snapped the chain. The car slithered sideways and backwards and crashed into the cliff face. I drove to the village and brought back a long cable. This time I took the wheel myself and made the chauffeur drive the tractor.

At last we got to the top. I got out, enjoying the immense landscape spread out before us in the brief Southern twilight. The girl got out after me and as she passed me whispered again "Bravo!" I wondered what it was she meant to convey. Then her father asked me without more ado whether they could spend the night at my house. I explained that I only rented a room, but that they could certainly enjoy the hospitality of my bachelor quarters. Shelter was

found for their car in a stable. They remained with it. I thought they must be discussing their adventure, but I learned later from the girl that the chauffeur was warning them not to have anything to do with the Caucasians, who disliked the Russians.

Meanwhile I changed out of my greasy overalls, washed, and rested for a while on the rock outside the house, which served for a bench. Then I went up the village street to the independent stores (they still existed at the time, under NEP) and persuaded the shopkeeper to let me have half a side of smoked mutton, a dozen rolls, cigarettes, a bottle of soda-water, and some gingerbreads. On my return I built a big fire in another shed, while the party from Moscow watched me from inside the car in the stable.

The first to approach me now was the girl. I found her suddenly at my side. "Did I startle you?" she said. "Am I in the way?"

"Of course not. I am very glad to see you." I offered her a three-legged stool. She sat down, but looked at me doubtfully.

"We have been a lot of trouble to you, and you must be tired out."

I explained that we Caucasians loved to have visitors. Besides, I was not tired. When a man enjoyed his work, it was child's play to him.

"But are you really a Caucasian?"

"Of course."

"How is it you speak Russian so well?" This I could not tell her, for I had always taken it for granted. "Then, if *that* is not a secret, will you tell me your name?"

All at once we were shy with each other, and I made a ridiculous game of telling her my name, asking her to guess my name from the patronymic of the last Tsar and the Christian name of Rasputin (Grigory). "Oh, how horrible!" she cried. Then realising that it really was my own name, she blushed, tried to apologise, then burst out laughing. She had a lovely laugh, and to my Caucasian imagination her gleaming teeth were immediately the ivory gates of paradise and her laughing face a flowering vale. Besides, she was to me a semi-divine being coming from Moscow. Delighted with the attention she was paying me, I unconsciously stopped what I was doing and stood gaping at her; then, my voice almost stifled with emotion, I asked her if I might know *her* name. To my dismay, the laughter vanished from her face, she became grave, clasped her hands about one knee, and said hesitantly: "You had better call me Katya."

I understood her hesitation later. We went on talking and, indeed,

there began a friendship between us which was to last for many years, if it can be said ever to have stopped.

Katya's father was Vassily Vassilyevich Okman,¹ one of the founders of the Revolution who had been through the Civil War and had been awarded the Order of the Red Banner. He had been a prominent worker in the Comintern, but he had fallen out with the Central Committee of the Party and had been accused first of Trotskyism, then of sympathy with the so-called "new opposition" of Zinovyev and Kamenev. He had refused to "admit his errors" because, in his own opinion, he did not belong to any opposition at all but was an orthodox Marxist-Leninist. Since nothing could be proved against him and his services to the Revolution were unquestionable (although in later years this would not have saved him from Siberia), he was given indefinite leave, provided with his own car and chauffeur, and sent into a kind of honourable exile. This fate (so little different from the mild banishment to the Caucasus imposed on Russian intellectuals a century ago) was characteristic of this early stage of the régime.

Katya told me more of Okman's views. He was deeply influenced by the eighteenth-century French visionary, Morelli, whose *Code of Nature* was published in Russian for the first time in 1923. He believed that Marx, Engels and Lenin, whose theories the official Party policy was supposed to implement, had shown the way to achieve the fundamentally good society Morelli had outlined. Morelli's three "Fundamental and Sacred Laws" of the totalitarian Utopia were, to Okman, the mainspring of all genuine socialism, and indeed, how startling and inspiring, how well calculated to "cut all the vices and ills of society at the root" they sounded also to me! No private property, every citizen to be dependent on the State, and to contribute whatever he was able to the common good: how wonderful it seemed! Far from distrusting Okman's ideas, I felt convinced that he was a revolutionary of the purest water and must continue on his inspired way until the misunderstanding with the leaders of the régime was forgotten. The inner Party conflict seemed to me a trifle, almost invisible in the steadfast glow of that unflinching Utopian inspiration.

Katya asked me not to discuss politics with her father, as his nerves were in a very battered state. After all he had done for the régime, his exile was very bitter to him—not on his own account, but because he was worried about the Revolution: if his views,

¹ This is not his true name.

which he believed to be so orthodox, were frowned upon in Moscow, was there something wrong with the official policy? He saw enemies of the Revolution everywhere. I promised, of course. But when Okman joined us it was he who started a political conversation. He began by asking me what the members of my Comsomol group thought of the policy of the Central Committee of the Party. (This is a question which in later years no older man would have thought of asking an unknown Comsomol, implying as it did either a doubt in his own mind or an intention to cross-examine, to which the Comsomol could only reply that he supported the official line. But Okman came of that generation of Bolsheviks who not only asked questions and debated, but thought this their duty.)

Remembering my promise to Katya, I answered cautiously that I had not studied the policy in detail and could not really tell him what he wanted to know. That would never do, said Okman. I ought not to confine myself to manual work, but should be interested in the state of mind and views of others; besides *we*—he meant the founders of the régime did not want men merely to work, without political purpose, without vision of the aim ahead. Russia had toiled many centuries and had still remained mere Russia. (When he spoke of Russia, like others of his generation, he meant that vast land where people lived in misery and squalor, ruled by the iron hand of the Tsars.) Abroad, too, the workers were still only a proletariat which had not succeeded in rising to the higher level ordained for them by history. But it was not for us to work in that way.

I now received a lecture on Marxism-Leninism from one of the fathers of the Revolution, and it may be imagined how eagerly I drank in his words. You could work merely to satisfy your own needs, he said, or you could work, consecrating the fruits of your labour consciously, in advance, to the great task of liberating the workers of the world from oppression and slavery—and that was quite a different thing. Soviet Russia desired to build a new society, but that was unthinkable without the proletarian revolution taking place in other countries too; therefore all we did we were also doing for the proletariat of the world. Each of us must think of himself as one of a great army destined to liberate mankind from capitalist slavery. What did I think of that? Seeing Katya's eyes fixed on me anxiously I answered that all I could think of at the moment was the pleasure of having guests from Moscow, and how glad I was that they were seeing something of our beautiful Caucasus.

Okman only grumbled. Beautiful country, wonderful scenery—bourgeois notions, all that. "A nice house, domestic comforts,

money and a pretty wife", this was what many comrades had sunk to, and there were Party members and Comsomols at home who were doing the same. This was the way to surrender the gains of the Revolution. "The NEP has ruined our morals, the desire for petty comforts is stifling the Revolution in our souls."

He had settled down by the fire, lit his pipe and went on and on; in the end I was unwillingly drawn into objecting. Was there anything wrong, I asked, with our achieving a decent standard of living for ourselves which could serve as an example to other countries? Was there not a revolutionary force in this?

He looked at me in astonishment and told me that he had actually heard these same arguments from some of the leading members in the Party, in particular from Bukharin. Had I heard of him? Indeed I had, and had studied his works. What did I think of him? With a return to prudence I said I was too small a man to have an opinion about one of the leaders of the Party.

"Well," said Okman, "I'll tell you. Bukharin is the leading counsel of the Kulaks; he is always on the side of any opportunist in the communist parties abroad; he is on the side of anyone who is drifting to the Right."

This was a complete surprise to me. Andrey had taught me to believe that in the whole Olympus of Bolshevism there was not a man cleverer, better qualified, more honourable or more revolutionary than Bukharin. Yet here he was condemned by someone who knew him personally, and who obviously himself had a considerable standing in the Party—how otherwise would he be touring the Caucasus with his own chauffeur-driven car?

"Shall I tell you what your Bukharin is like?" cried Okman. "He will never come out into the open. He will prove to you privately that Stalin wants to be the leader of an 'autarchic communism'—the communism of a Russia isolated from the rest of the world. He detests both Stalin and Molotov, but he will never publicly oppose their views. He wants others to fight his political battles for him, that's what he's like."

I said I had never imagined there were such dissensions inside the Politbureau—this never entered our heads here in the Caucasus. Nor did it seem easy to tell who was right and who was wrong.

"Neither side," Okman snapped. "They are all traitors to the Revolution, they are all renegades without principles. The Stalinists are not communists at all, they are nationalists and opportunists. As for those of us who have stuck to the revolutionary ideal, we have been thrown right out."

I argued with him at length. My view was that when we had good roads and bridges (a matter in which both he and I had reason to be interested), when our shops were full of goods, when we had sufficient electricity and the maximum of mechanisation, when the State with all its features of compulsion had withered away and frontier *cordons sanitaires* and cominterns and forced revolutions were things of the past, then people of other countries would themselves come to the conclusion that our way of life was worth copying.

In the end he accused me—though admittedly in a precise and carefully qualified way—of the “psychology of Right-Wing Deviation” and I answered back that this was no worse than the Trotskyism to which he seemed to be tending.

I realised, the minute the words were out of my mouth, that this was the kind of scene Katya had been dreading and I had promised to avoid, but it was too late. Without a word, my honoured Moscow guest got up, and, after sweeping me with a glance of scorn, went back to his car. Katya immediately reproached me bitterly, and even without this I would have wished the ground to swallow me up: not only had I broken my promise to her, but I had broken one of the unwritten laws of Caucasian life—I had offended my guest. In any case I had only the haziest notion of what all these deviations were about and was the last person to criticise a man of Okman's experience and standing. The only thing was to go and offer my apologies; Okman accepted them at once, with understanding and courtesy.

I now prepared dinner. There was a *fizonag* for each person, a slice of spitted smoked mutton grilled over hot coals. I filled the glasses and stood to welcome my guests in Caucasian fashion. An easy conversation developed; in the course of it Katya asked me to tell them more about our local customs. This was a subject on which it was easy for me to be eloquent.

While the twentieth-century states argue about how to uproot human failings by such artificial instruments as prisons and police, the Caucasians have argued for over two centuries about how to protect human values, long since crystallised by tradition, from the vulgarising influence of state institutions. These traditions are in the blood of the people and without them the Caucasus is unthinkable: you can frighten a mountain eagle away from his native heights, but not for long, and so it is with us and our native customs.

One of the strongest of these customs is hospitality. If a guest arrives—and a guest is anyone who chooses to turn up, whatever his origin or his purpose—it is the duty of the host to kill a sheep

and arrange a lavish banquet. The guest must be introduced to all the relatives and friends of the host, and they must all treat him with the same respect as that with which they treat the master of the house. The security of the guest is a matter of family honour. Whatever your country, if you are my guest, if I have accepted you into my home, you are under my protection; your misfortune is my misfortune, your honour is my honour, and I am bound to defend you with my life.

Before he leaves, the guest is always given a present. It might be a horse with full harness, or a fine weapon such as a sabre with a silver hilt, or some article of clothing. Usually it is the host who takes the initiative, but whatever pleases the guest must be offered him.

All this I told my new friends. When I had finished, the chauffeur commented: "Suppose the guest wants the old woman, does the host have to give him that too?"

Such vulgarity, unused as I was to it, horrified me. I told him sharply that in a Caucasian household there was nobody called "the old woman" and women were not chattels to be given away.

He then asked me if it was not wise to hide objects of value if a guest were in the house, for fear that he should ask for them. This staggered me so much that for some moments I could not even understand what he meant. For one thing, a guest never asks for anything—the most he would do is to say that he likes a thing; and to hide it away for fear he should like it struck me as a form of theft.

I explained further the relation between host and guest. If a guest needs money for a purpose which is honourable, he is expected to tell his host, who will then assist him even if it means calling in the neighbours to help. But if the guest should steal as much as a farthing from his host he would rue it: he might be *given* a herd of cattle, but for the theft of a goat he might lose his head.

As for the relations between the sexes, I explained, these were based on the strictest standards. It was not that true love did not exist (as is sometimes asserted about Eastern countries); the days when a bride could be bought or abducted against her will were long past, and it was the pride of a son of the Caucasus that his love was a conflagration—an unconditional preparedness to give all for the beloved. But a young man and a young girl could not speak to one another until they had been formally introduced by older people, and the severity with which a girl's virginity was protected by custom could hardly be conceived in the outer world.

This and much else of the same sort I related to my guests. To me

these were real values and on them was built a proud and honourable community. I think I felt that I was giving my guests of my best; but when I paused all Okman said was: "*samobytny narodets!*"—"An odd little people!"

I was surprised by his choice of words and his condescending voice. Was he not one of Lenin's closest lieutenants and had not Lenin been the advocate of the self-determination of peoples and of their equality? "Why *narodets*—little people?" I asked. "Why not at least *narod*—people? For we are a real people, patriotic, faithful to our standards, and with great historical experience behind us."

Then came Okman's unemotional though still scornful answer: "The Revolution," he said, "does not admit any of your customs. We have only one custom—liquidation of the mastery of certain classes over all others."

"That won't do here, in the Caucasus," I replied firmly. "We highlanders are all custom, and if you destroy these customs of ours, you destroy us mountain folk."

Now it was Okman's turn to stare uncomprehendingly. Though I did not realise it then, here were two worlds vitally in conflict.

THE "NEW" MORALITY

THE POLITICAL shock of my discussion with Okman was not the last or even the chief surprise which this visit brought me. If I was disturbed by his political views, I recalled that he was, after all, out of favour in Moscow; in any case the disturbance would have been only a small wave breaking against the granite cliff of my youthful faith. A far greater shock, however, awaited me in the field of morals, where the crude, tangible facts were thrown into strong relief by the standards which I shared with all true Caucasians, of whatever political beliefs.

My supper party over, Okman's wife and daughter left the table and went back to their large closed car to spend the night. I was most put out. That guests from afar should sleep in their own vehicle, in "my own courtyard", was unthinkable. I begged Okman to tell them that they could spend the night in my room; the bed, though small, would be more comfortable than the seat of the car and I had prepared everything for them. He said he would speak to them and went over to the car, while I remained by the fire with the chauffeur, Ivan.

To my polite enquiry as to how he liked the Caucasus, Ivan replied: "I'm b—— if I know. The roads are hell. If you don't keep your eyes peeled you're down a precipice." I remarked that no doubt in Moscow it was much easier. Oh yes, of course it was. "That's the hub of life, my dear chap! Moscow's civilised!" And then, to rub it in, he went on: "This damned out-of-the-way hole's awful. Why, you can't even touch a wench here, you said so yourself."

He had stressed early in the evening that he was a Party member; this and his coming from Moscow meant for me that he ought to have been a very knight of honour. But now a second example of *new* Moscow manners was given me. An argument had broken out between the Okmans; I heard Okman's wife say loudly that on no account would she sleep in the room of a "scruffy young tractor-driver". The scorn in her voice was amazing; clearly in her view the fact that I drove a tractor in the land of workers and peasants put

me outside the pale. "What airs the fellow puts on! Giving us supper, making speeches, pretending he is a civilised being!"

This apparently was too much even for Okman (who, I learned afterwards, was a sadly wife-ridden man); he lost his temper and almost shouted at her, reminding her that I had worked all day, saved them from what might have been a nasty accident, given them an excellent meal and was now inviting them to accept my bedroom; instead of being grateful she was behaving like a pig. Katya was evidently also on my side. In the end he positively ordered his wife to accept my offer: "People in these parts take it very badly if their hospitality is refused."

So, more out of fear than anything else, she agreed, and they all returned to the fire.

Later, when I saw how Moscow workers lived, I realised that Okman's wife had reasons for her misgivings about my room. But at that time I only knew the domestic life of simple Caucasian folk. Not only was a bed expected to have linen sheets as well as warm covers and a mattress, but these were expected to be spotless. The people from whom I rented my room would have been very shocked if I had gone to bed in my clothes or without washing my face and hands; my sheets were changed frequently and I was, of course, given fresh ones for my guests. Moreover, my room was always reasonably tidy and it had not been difficult to make it spick and span.

It was not, of course, a "well furnished" room; there was nothing luxurious about it. The floor was not carpeted. But its boards were well and regularly scrubbed, and there were clean, bright, locally-woven runners from wall to wall and beside the bed. Between the two windows facing the village street stood a plain wooden table. Over it was a mirror in a wooden frame which was unpainted and darkened with age. At either end of the table were neatly stacked piles of books, and while I was showing the mother round, her daughter had managed to look at some of the titles: Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Hadzhi Murat* and *The Cossacks*, volumes of Pushkin, Lermontov, Hetagurov and Nekrassov, as well as the modern poet Essenin; works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, Stalin and Molotov's *Concerning the Opposition*, and a number of pamphlets by Bukharin, *The All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) in Resolutions*, Chicherin's *Political Thinkers*, Malinin and Burenin's *Arithmetical Problems*, Shaposhnikov and Valtsev's *Problems in Algebra* and Fordson's *Tractor Handbook* were among the rest. "Look at this, Mother," said Katya. "Comrade Tokaev says he has never been to school, but look at what he reads." I had indeed never been to

school, and strange to say, how and when I learned to read is quite lost in the background of my early memories.

I wished my guests goodnight and left them. Soon after I had settled down, however, the mother appeared. I thought she was looking for her husband, whom I had fixed up in the outhouse, near the remains of the open fire. What was my surprise when, after bending over him to make sure he was asleep, she hurried over to the limousine where Ivan was clearly waiting for her: she did not even need to tap for the door to be opened. A few moments later, from the movements in the vehicle, it was shockingly clear what was going on. What made it worse was the despatch with which this last scene was played: it was obviously not the first, nor would it be the last time. While travelling with her husband and grown-up daughter Okman's wife was indulging in loose intercourse not merely with another man, but a man blatantly devoid of any semblance of culture! What shocked me was not that he was a chauffeur—this did not enter into it—I was shocked, apart from the basic moral question, by her complete lack of any sense of standards or measure. For this was a woman of high standing, a woman from the new Soviet Moscow, and of her I expected an ideal example.

The following morning my Moscow visitors continued their journey, and I went on with my work.

After completing operations in that village I was sent to another. The mechanisation of the harvest was still a stirring event in these parts, and my reception at a hamlet which had never seen a tractor before drove the Okmans clean out of my head. The whole village had come out to meet me, with official speeches. Farm girls had bunches of flowers to present to me, and I was tempted to feel as wise and as powerful as King Solomon himself.

In all this crowd of strange faces I did not immediately notice one which was familiar. It was not till I had driven past her that I realised it was Katya who stood leaning against a fence obviously disheartened by my apparently cutting her. Of course, I stopped and went back to her. She had walked four miles, she complained, only to be snubbed by me! Fancy welcoming a tractor-driver as if he were an emperor! No wonder, with a dozen pretty girls offering me flowers, I had not noticed her, and me up in my driver's seat making eyes at them all! We quickly made it up.

Later, strolling beside a mountain stream, with tears in her eyes she told me that the situation between her mother and the chauffeur had passed all bounds of decency. Okman's wife now went to join her paramour without the least attempt at concealment. She mocked

her husband's greying hairs and to his face called him an old dotard. He bore it all because in his view the Revolution had put an end to a husband's right to control his wife, but he was so miserable that he was drinking heavily and frequently threatened to commit suicide. He was also now incessant in his outspoken attacks on Stalin, Molotov, Bukharin and Thaelman. Katya found the strain between her parents almost more than she could bear.

I asked her if her father knew of her coming to see me. She said yes, and he had said nothing against it. Okman, she told me smiling, called me his Caucasian "Pudling"—pig-iron—because in his opinion I was but raw iron still not transformed into steel. Was this true, she laughed—or was I just cast iron?

I did not know enough about metallurgy at the time to answer her question, but I laughed heartily with her. When evening came she agreed that I should take her home. She mounted on the trailer bar and held on to the saddle, but after a time her hold became too precarious and without more ado she put her arms right round me and held tight. I will not say that I did not enjoy being her support.

Halfway there I halted and offered to give her a driving lesson; she was very willing, and soon we were bowling along in direct drive, Katya thrilled by the speed at which she was driving. Of course, I felt bound to keep my hand on the wheel, or rather her hand held the wheel and my horny one held hers. For a few moments she drove as if I did not exist, but soon her face, so close to mine, turned to me with a begging, helpless expression. We reached a steep hill and I stopped. She dismounted and I helped her; she slipped and found herself in my arms, our lips nearly touching (and our eyes gazing deep into each other's). But here my Caucasian principles took control. Apart from everything else, this girl was a guest in my country, and in my hands. I did not speak and pretended not to have noticed what had happened. Katya pouted, flounced off, and, when I begged her pardon (though without being at all clear what it was about), called me a coward. The scene was interrupted by the appearance of a local waggoner, which further enraged Katya. After he had passed, we both resumed our places on the tractor and completed the journey to the house where the Okmans were staying.

When we arrived, Okman's wife and the chauffeur were out on their usual evening drive. Okman was asleep, wearing a remarkably threadbare dressing-gown, and snoring so loudly that he could be heard outside the house. Katya awakened him; he was genuinely glad to see me, calling me "Pudling" to my face, and embarrassed me by

telling me that Katya was always talking about me and was surely in love with me. Katya protested vigorously, and left the room. In my confusion I then made the situation worse by enquiring about his wife. Oh, he said, I was not to be surprised by her absence, she was hardly ever at home now unless Ivan was in too—that filthy scoundrel who had caused her to have one abortion after another. That was how their affairs stood now, and what right had he to object? A true revolutionary had no business to get involved in petty domestic matters. Once he had taken up the fight against outworn bourgeois prejudices it was his duty to set an example. Comrade Kirov—one of the outstanding men in the Party and the State—was quite right in saying that the private morals of a man or woman were no more than one-thousandth part of the whole communist ethic.

Why indeed should he be jealous? Okman went on. Ivan was giving Liza what her husband no longer could. She wanted physical pleasure, when he merely wanted to go to sleep. The only thing which did irk poor Okman in all this was that whenever they quarrelled, his wife called his encroaching senility "Trotskyism". Now Okman was trained always to draw logical conclusions from facts, and the fact that his wife regarded Ivan as a true Bolshevik and himself, on account of his impotence, as a Trotskyist, led him to the conclusion that any wife might feel justified in giving herself to any man provided she regarded him as a Stalinist and her husband as a deviationist. This seemed to him too vast a generalisation, and it horrified him. To all this strange reasoning I listened with wonder and some disgust.

Some time later that evening, Katya and I were talking quietly on a bench in the orchard when the Okmans' car returned. Katya's mother went indoors, lit the oil lamp, then returned to her paramour. "Sound asleep?" "Yes." "Let's sit here awhile," and they sat down on the opposite side of the fence from us. As a result we heard all that passed between them. Ivan asked her why she did not leave her husband. What would be the good of that, she said, Ivan had a wife and a child himself. Oh, he could fix that. All the same she did not think it a good idea. The old man still had money and position. It meant a good apartment, a car, respect. Surely it would be best to go on as they were. Then Ivan clearly began to fondle his mistress. Suddenly the door of the house opened and Okman appeared. "Liza!" he called. "Liza!" His wife cursed, and let him go on calling—"he would soon stop"; as indeed he did, and went back into the house while she and Ivan remained in the garden.

Katya sobbed. It was always like this now. What was she to do? Leave the house? But she was fond of her old father, even though he was a Trotskyist. I said that I too was fond of him. In spite of his Trotskyism (which I no longer doubted), I found his sincerity and his idealism pleasing. Why did Katya not try to stop her mother behaving as she did? Katya shook her head. It was useless, she said. If I could see the way she behaved at home, in Moscow, I would not even suggest such a thing.

Katya herself still seemed to me a very sweet young girl, and I felt very sorry for her, so sorry that, as we sat there under the resplendent star-lit sky, I could not help putting my arm round her shoulders, drawing her gently to me and kissing her on the forehead. Katya did not resist and no doubt expected more. But it never entered my head to exceed that brotherly kiss and I remained outwardly—and quite unsuitably—unconcerned. After a while Katya said goodbye to me formally and slowly left me. As she opened the door I saw her silhouette against the light; she turned once in my direction, but without halting, and no doubt with scorn.

Young men burning with revolutionary fire often fail to grasp what goes on in a young girl's heart. They do not know that it may be unbelievably painful for her to be offered only the barbed wire defences of restraint, or a chaste kiss on the forehead.

Matters did not end there, however. In due course, having finished my work in the villages, I returned to Vladikavkaz. My train arrived at eleven in the evening. Lugging my heavy suitcase I went to meet Katya in the waiting-room, as we had arranged by letter. Her parents had gone back to Moscow, but she had stayed behind to say goodbye to me. She had taken a room in a small hotel near the station. We went there and stayed together, wrapped in conversation, till half-past one. I rose to leave, but she absolutely insisted on my staying. Now I was confronted with a terrible problem. An idealist Comsomol, bound by oath to set an example to others, how could I spend the night in the same room as a young girl, one, moreover, who was also in the Comsomol and even younger than I was? What if my comrades learned of it? Still worse, what if my mother came to know? I might even be tried by the Comsomol for infringement of the moral code.

But Katya was terribly persistent. She knew that I could not bring myself to hurt her feelings just on the eve of her departure for Moscow. She called me a coward and reproached me with having encouraged her to stay behind. Finally she buried her face in the pillow and sobbed. What more natural than for me to sit down

gingerly on the edge of the bed and lay my hand on her shoulder? Katya wept, and I went on patting her shoulder, hoping and hoping that this would soothe her and she would stop—until in fact we both of us fell asleep.

It was well into the night when she suddenly whispered in my ear. Was I asleep? Yes. Well, she couldn't sleep. I found myself suggesting that she should look out of the window at the stars, or imagine them and count them. All at once she sat up, put an arm round me and drew me slightly towards her. I was terribly upset. Had she lost her mind? I demanded. Yes, she answered in a faint voice. I protested. She asked me if all Caucasians were like me. I warned her that she was playing with fire. She said she wanted to be consumed in it. Then burn away, I said, and let me sleep. Again she called me names, hard and tender in turn, and asked me if I could not see that she loved me. I said it was too dark, in any case the best thing she could do was to pour cold water over herself. "If you pour the whole sea over me I shall still love you," she said, and throwing her arms round my neck, drew my lips to hers. Her passion so communicated itself to me, all restraints vanished, and the rules and orders of the Comsomol organisation were as if they had never been.

Of course, this was something I had never known, this coming together of two blazing young bodies which could not enough be one. The romantic side of my nature also caught fire. The dark little hotel room was aglow with the Caucasian spring, with flowering orchards and sunlit seas. . . .

We had been carried away on a tidal wave, but for me this was the equivalent of a promise of marriage—or rather it should have been. But if I was innocent I was by no means ignorant. At the crucial moment I realised that Katya was not a virgin.

Only those who have themselves grown up in a society of such patriarchal uprightness of morals as our North Caucasian communities can imagine the loathing I felt. It was no mere reaction after the sexual act, but something infinitely more profound. I remember how I lay motionless on my back, unable to utter a word, staring above me into the dark, at the mercy of a complete paralysis of hatred, not for what I had done, but for the beautiful young body lying beside me. My whole life has been marked by soaring upsurges and correspondingly deep descents, but I do not think I have ever again experienced so shattering a disillusionment.

At last I regained control of myself. My language was icy and scathing. Why, I asked, had she "spat into my soul"? If I had known

how disgusting she was, how devoid of conscience, this would never have been done.

I was partly avenging myself for my hurt, partly dealing out my idea of justice. For a while she answered nothing, then gently—and cleverly—said: "Nor did I know that you, a Comsomol activist, could still be a prey to bourgeois prejudices and make a fuss about such trifles."

She could not have found a better way to wound me. For after all I could not forget that she was a Comsomol from new *Moscow* and the daughter of one of the founders of the Soviet State. To be accused by her, and in this quietly disillusioned way, of fostering bourgeois prejudice was inexpressibly painful. I got up, careful not to touch her, and dressed hastily.

To whom, I cried, had she so shamelessly given her virginity, "the supreme moral treasure of every young girl," and what right had she to love me? She assured me that she did love me, but I would have none of it.

"You are a fool," she said at last, "that's all I can say. I have not been dishonoured by anybody, and I am not disgusting."

Her attitude was completely incomprehensible to me. What I insisted on calling a "supreme value" was, according to her, merely a figment of bourgeois mentality and a proof that I was not a real Comsomol at all. I argued furiously that she was merely trying to cover her shame with the flag of revolutionary freedom, and that the Comsomol would never admit this "free love" of which she spoke.

But she only laughed, and in such a way that it brought doubt into my mind. Again I recalled her origin and the possibility that she did perhaps after all speak with the true voice of the *Moscow* Comsomol. Perhaps I was backward and provincial, a victim of bourgeois prejudice, or of a primitive conception of life which did not fit into the social and political ethic of the larger world? Torn with doubts and a new shame, I at last apologised to Katya for all I had said. A few hours later I saw her off at the station on the next train to *Moscow*. If we were not lovers we were at least friends.

LOSS OF IDENTITY

IF MY FIRST MEETING with real Moscow people and my first—and so quickly disappointed—love had an immediately disturbing effect on me, the result was not to shake my convictions, whether in the field of politics or of morals, but rather to confirm me in them. Indeed, even before Katya's train had left, I had repented of apologising to her; when she asked me to tell her that I loved her, I answered with the unyieldingness of youth that I *had* loved her but that not a trace of this love now remained, nor could I believe that she had ever loved me, or that she could ever love anyone again.

That, I thought, was the end between us. But five years later we were to meet again, though in greatly changed circumstances. This, however, belongs to a later chapter.

But my collision with the Okmans did stimulate me in my work—not so much the work by which I earned my living as the studies on which I was already engaged, and in due course, I was put forward by my Trade Union for a University scholarship. The Soviet Union was at that time feverishly engaged in creating a new educated class, partly to replace those of the old intellectuals who had opposed the Revolution, and partly to meet the demand for a vastly increased army of educated men and women without whom industrialisation, the development of social services and the raising of the standard of living of the workers were unthinkable. Among other schemes "Workers' Universities" were established in the great cities, to which the Trade Unions could recommend adult workers who had not gone through the ordinary processes of schooling. My brother Andrey was already studying administration at the Zinovyev Communist University in Leningrad, and now at the end of 1929—oh marvellous fortune!—I myself, just before my twentieth birthday, was awarded a bursary and told to prepare to travel to the same city.

It was a great happiness to me to be near my brother, whose brilliant career had taken him from District to County Comsomol Committee, through the Higher Course of Communist Studies and the Soviet Party School to the Vladikavkaz Pedagogical Institute

and finally to the University. But in any case Leningrad was a Mecca to me; it incarnated the very spirit of the Revolution.

Even many young Soviet people tend to forget this today, while abroad the intimate significance of our cities and institutions obviously cannot be well known, so that what was once common knowledge about Leningrad has been obliterated by the long association of the "Soviet régime" with the Moscow Kremlin. Yet it was in Leningrad, at the end of that short period in the First World War when it was known as Petrograd, that Lenin and his companions laid the foundations of the Soviet State. Only when the country was assailed from all sides by counter-revolutionary forces aided by Russia's former allies was the capital transferred to Moscow, deeper in the heart of Russia, but in Russian tradition always associated with obscurantism and backwardness.

Founded by that eccentric autocrat, Peter the Great, who first, after many centuries, tried to bring his country back into the comity of nations and, to symbolise this, built a capital in the contemporary European style on the marshy emergence of the Neva into the Baltic Sea, Leningrad was, from the outset, imbued with an enquiring, Western spirit. Here it was that the "Decembrists" under Nicholas I and the "People's Will Group" under Alexander II plotted against tyranny; here the first serious workers' strike took place in 1870; here the "Northern League of Russian Workers" was founded in 1878 and Blagoev's Marxist League in 1884. Here Lenin began his underground work in 1893 and, two years later, founded the "Petersburg League of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class". Here, on the "Bloody Sunday" of 1905, when thousands of defenceless petitioners were shot down before the Winter Palace, Tsarism was finally condemned by the conscience of the world. And here in 1917 the Soviet State was founded and its institutions—the Council of People's Commissars, the Politbureau, the Comintern, the Cheka and others—were set up.

I was, in short, to travel from my beloved but inevitably backward Caucasus to what I considered to be the hub of the universe. I was exceedingly proud. The District Trade Union Committee handed me my excellent testimonials and the first instalment of my bursary; speeches were made in which the comrades expressed the hope that in far-off, legendary Leningrad, I would bear high the banner of honour of the working class of the Caucasus. A large party gathered together to bid me farewell—relatives, friends, members of the Trade Union Council and the Comsomol and reporters from the papers to which I contributed. They even persuaded me to abandon

my notorious ascetism to the extent of drinking with them a few glasses of our splendid Caucasian red wine.

It is easier for me now than it was then to assess the kind of person I was, and this is perhaps the place for a brief self-portrait. I was exceedingly arrogant and self-opinionated; I was single-minded to the point of the ridiculous and without any sense of humour at all. Coupled with this went a remarkably guileless trust in other people, to whom I ascribed my own frankness and abnegation of self. I had the youthful ascetic's scorn for such forms of self-indulgence as tobacco and wine, a trait which is not at all characteristic of my fellow Caucasians: most of them cannot conceive of life without an occasional jug of our dark red wine, but to me this meant merely an aroma of tar and a drug to dull my senses.

On this occasion, the farewell glasses I drank did indeed have an effect on my unaccustomed stomach which was catastrophic in its consequences. Almost as soon as my train moved I sank into a blissful sleep, and I did not wake until the following morning, when we were drawing into Rostov-on-Don, the new administrative capital of the North Caucasian region. And then, what did I find? My boots, which I had unlaced the better to sleep, had vanished, so had my suitcase, the basket containing my stock of food for the journey, my cap, even my trouser-belt, and, worst of all, my notecase with my money, testimonials and all other documents! (My ticket, fortunately, was in the keeping of the brakesman.)

Soviet trains do not have communicating carriages, and each coach has its own guard or brakesman. It was to him I first turned, only to receive the first of many unhelpful answers. "What d'you think I am?" he demanded, without any of the politeness I considered due to a young man honoured by his Trade Union and travelling to Leningrad. "I'm the brakesman, I am. I have to look after the running and check the tickets, that's my job."

"You ought to look after your passengers," I argued fiercely. "If you can't do your job properly you ought to be put on to sweeping the yard or cleaning the privies. What do you think I am going to do now?"

What had that to do with him? he cried. And so for cleaning privies, did I know that I was talking to a proletarian?

In those days to be a proletarian was still the hall mark of power, even though it was shared with so many millions: each proletarian genuinely felt that he belonged to the ruling class. But then I was a proletarian too, and a very special one. So I shouted that a proletarian had no right to stand about gaping, he ought to see that other

proletarians did not have their luggage stolen by rogues, that was his duty. The brakesman lost his temper and demanded what proof I could give him that I was a proletarian—travelling with a trunkful of things and a pocket full of money, snoring all night because I was drunk—where had I got so much drink if I was a real proletarian?

But I was very persistent, and in the end I did get something from him: he called the guard and together they wrote and signed the following statement:

“Concerning the theft of the belongings of a passenger calling himself Grigory Alexandrovich Tokaev, on today’s date a passenger in coach No. 5, compartment 7, Comrade G. A. Tokaev informed us that he had been robbed by thieves, on his declaration the following was stolen, namely: two sets of underclothes, one shirt, one overcoat, one pair of knee-boots, one hundred and three roubles in cash, two roast fowls, three pasties, twenty eggs, a loaf of bread, one melon, a Comsomol membership card, a Trade Union card, a certificate about his despatch to Leningrad, two testimonials, a photograph of his mother, his sister and others, to which we give our signatures:

(signed) Spiridonov

Chief Guard of Train No. 29.

(signed) Zubkov

Brakesman of Coach No. 5.”

This seemed better than nothing, and with it I emerged from Rostov station, hatless, beltless, with only thin socks on my feet, confident of finding assistance at the Headquarters of the Comsomol. There, however, I was curtly informed that thousands of young men travelled through Rostov every day, and if they were all given money the national budget would not suffice, not to speak of the budget of the Comsomol. I argued, of course, that they did not all need assistance, they had not all been robbed, and Comsomol officials had no right to be indifferent to the needs of their members. But the official merely informed me, smiling, that the Secretariat had more important things to do, and showed me out.

Shocked and disappointed though I was, I turned with undiminished confidence to the “real proletariat”—the Regional Trade Union Council. Here I was first heard by a one-legged comrade who listened attentively and carefully examined my document, then shrugged his shoulders and said: “Very interesting. One might even say very, very interesting. But I don’t quite see why you have come to tell me this story.”

What did he mean? I stormed. He had heard all the details. I wanted him to advance me some money. "Hm. I wouldn't mind being assisted with some money myself. A glorious hope, Comrade!"

"But I know quite definitely that the Trade Unions have a fund for such purposes," I said.

"Quite right. But only for their members."

"But I am a member!"

"You have no membership card, therefore you are not a member."

"But it's been stolen from me. Read this certificate again."

"Thefts are matters for the railway police, and that is where you should go, Comrade."

Nothing came of this long conversation, but an hour later I was back again; this time I was seen by another bureaucrat who told me sharply that he had no money to give me. "You *have* a fund," I almost shouted at him, "and it is your duty to help me because I am a citizen of the Soviet Union, a worker, a member of my Trade Union, and I am hungry and without shoe-leather."

He shouted back then, cursing, summoned the financial deity and told him to issue me five roubles. I protested that I needed at least twenty-five, but I got no more. Then, as was quite normal in those times, after swearing at each other, we turned to friendly discussion and he gave me a free ticket for dinner at the Trade Union canteen.

I still had my railway ticket, and in due course I reached Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic. This republic with its high industrial concentration must, I thought, surely represent the true dictatorship of the proletariat: I was still convinced that red tape existed only in our "backward" Caucasus. I was, however, received with the same cold indifference as in Rostov. I found myself calling an official of the All-Ukraine Trade Union Council an office rat, and telling him it was not for nothing that the Russian proverb said: "Full belly does not understand empty belly." He warned me in a solemn voice to guard my tongue: "I am no parasite but a proletarian, of proletarian origin. If you want to know, I started life as a worker and rose only after the Revolution. Nor have I any funds. Every farthing here is accounted for. You should not forget that the country is busy with the Five Year Plan."

"I know all that," I shouted, "but *you* should not forget that I am starving and barefoot. What do you expect me to do? Die of hunger? Or take up thieving?"

"That is your private business," he cried indignantly, and pointed to the door.

It occurred to me now that I should go to the President of the

Ukrainian Republic himself, Grigory Ivanovich Petrovsky, of whom I had heard much from Andrey. Petrovsky was an old Bolshevik, a candidate for the Politbureau; he was second President of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and first President of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee; I had heard that he was a real champion of the working man.

Needless to say, I never got to Petrovsky; but at his headquarters I was seen by one Comrade Boreyko, another old Bolshevik and formerly a worker himself. He was dressed with such simplicity that only the office in which he received me made me realise how important he was. His treatment of my case was interesting.

He was a typical Ukrainian artisan of about sixty, with long, grizzled moustaches; he wore a greasy leather peaked cap and a coarse high-necked canvas tunic belted outside his trousers, and he spoke without a trace of cunning or hypocrisy.

After he had heard my story he scratched the back of his head, thought a bit and asked me if I had applied to the Comsomol and Trade Union Headquarters. I said I had.

"They turned you out?"

"They turned me out."

"The b—— swine," said Boreyko. "They turn everybody out. But don't be downhearted, lad, let's put our heads together and see what can be done."

I observed that it was all very unpleasant. "You're telling me," cried Boreyko. "Of course it's wrong. But are you in the right? If you wanted to get to Leningrad you should have kept your eyes open and not let yourself be robbed. That's the trouble with the Soviet working man, so long as we are at our lathe or steering-wheel, we're heroes, but the moment we're in a strange situation we go all to pieces. It's just the same with the Trade Union officials. As long as they are workers they lay into the bureaucrats for red tape, but as soon as they are officials themselves, they're worse than those they've been cursing. But no matter, let's see—would a pound of smoked sausages keep you going as far as Leningrad?"

"Ample, Comrade Boreyko," I said.

"Two loaves of bread?"

"Yes."

"Two packets of cigarettes?"

"I don't smoke."

"Bravo! All the same, let's put them in. They'll be useful. Half a litre of vodka?"

"I am a non-drinker."

"Vodka is never in the way. We'll order that too."

Boreyko made a list, then took me to the All-Ukraine Central Executive Committee bar and asked the stout woman in charge to provide me with all he had put down—against signature, on credit—on account of extraordinary expenses. "And what's that?" he tapped on a small barrel. "Herrings, Comrade Boreyko," the woman said rather unwillingly, "pickled herrings". "What do you think, Comrade Tokaev? Two pounds? Or four? Excellent food for the journey."

"It's an unopened barrel, Comrade Boreyko," the bartender observed.

"That can soon be put right," and he himself took a hammer lying on a shelf nearby and started to work on the lid of the barrel.

Coming back to the office, he called in a middle-aged man in spectacles and told him to issue me with thirty roubles. The man said he could not pay out a penny.

"But I say you are to hand out thirty roubles," Boreyko said commandingly.

"On what authorisation?" the cashier asked. "By what authority?"

It was clear that I was far from being the first case of this sort. The cashier even threatened to report to a higher financial authority but Boreyko stood his ground. "What ruling? Because this Caucasian comrade hasn't got a penny."

I felt bound to protest and pointed out that at Rostov I had been issued with five roubles, of which I had one rouble and thirty-five copecks left.

"Did you hear?" Boreyko told the spectacles, with a smile. "One rouble, thirty-five. Do you think that will get him to Leningrad?" The cashier had to admit it wouldn't, but all the same. . . . Boreyko cut him short: "You ought to have more sense of responsibility, more proletarian sense. Hand this comrade twenty-eight roubles, sixty-five copecks, please." "But I have no authorisation, Comrade Boreyko . . ." "You pay the money up and we'll get the authorisation afterwards. Be a good fellow, pay up. I beg you. I will tell Grigory Ivanovich (i.e., Petrovsky) myself."

The reason I have related all this in such detail is that it does illustrate the spirit of the late twenties in the Soviet Union and the changes which were then taking place. The first thing that stands out is the possibility for a nobody like myself to have access to highly-placed officials, and even to argue with and protest to them, without any unpleasant consequences to myself. Secondly, there is

the fact that the remnants of the former-worker senior officials, such as Boreyko, were still trying to assist individuals whenever they could, and tended to think and to act as if they and the workers, whose interests they regarded as their own, were indeed masters of the country. At the same time a process of transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat was already nearing its completion; a new type of official had sprung up, a State bureaucracy was rapidly forming, which already insisted on its own rights. The notion of the "withering away of the State" (started by Friedrich Engels) was losing its force, and if there were still some people in authority who clung to the libertarian achievements of the Revolution, the majority already insisted merely on the letter of the bureaucratic law.

There were two types of mind: those who understood the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in a literal sense, and those who were vigorously engaged in eliminating what they called "Proletarian anarchy". I did not belong consciously to either group, and it is not my object here to give moral support to either. But I believe that this parting of the ways was of historic moment in determining the further fortunes of the Soviet peoples, and that without understanding this dichotomy in the concluding years of the twenties it is impossible to understand the significance to Soviet men and women of the dramatic events of the thirties, which we know as the dark days of the Stalin reaction and the rule of Yezhov.

Authority is sweet to men, and it is not surprising that those whom the Revolution had turned into rulers should have clung to power. Nor is it surprising that their exercise of authority was often crude. What is astonishing is not the workers' inexperience of public affairs but rather—in view of their age-long isolation from politics—the elemental maturity which they in fact revealed.

Were the workers capable of carrying their dictatorship through into the oncoming decades? I believe that, without the interference of semi-intellectuals such as Stalin and Molotov who pursued their own purely political careers, they would have been. No doubt, much time and money would have been spent by the Boreykos on their "You pay out, I say"; but who can assert that this would have been a lasting feature of their rule? They would have gained experience in time, and perhaps without losing the sense of responsibility and humanity which underlay Boreyko's approach to my case.

It has been said by a member of the "Right Deviation" in the All-Union Communist Party that the workers would have been forced in the end to admit their inability to manage public affairs because they lacked an intelligentsia. But it is not true that the

workers consist solely of an unenlightened mass. There is not an industrial enterprise that does not include intellectuals among its technicians, and the Trade Unions are an excellent all-round school: many statesmen of world fame have risen from their ranks. Besides, there were members of the old State machine who were on the side of the workers, and they could have been employed by the régime while the workers—who had no illusions as to their need of it—acquired higher education and formed an intelligentsia of their own.

These were the arguments used by leading representatives of the Soviet working class, inspiring them to persist in their struggle to maintain themselves in power.

But against their inexperience stood five centuries of Russian Imperial tradition and the centralising trend of the semi-intellectuals, led by Stalin and his bureaucrats. These were the people who were already on the up-grade, though they had not yet completed their triumph.

It was still possible in 1929 for men like Boreyko to imagine that it was *they* who would win through to a new society, based, above all, on individual understanding of the individual worker's needs. If their fiat had no longer true dictatorial power, it still had remarkable moral-political force. The bureaucrats who heard it sensed in it the voice of the workers in whose name the dictatorship existed. It was the voice clumsily unused to authority, the voice of simple, natural, direct justice and common sense. But a few years later the Boreykos were behind barbed wire, and the Revolution was dead.

A CAUCASIAN IN MOSCOW

MY TRAIN drew into the Kursky station. Moscow! Here I was in the great yet paltry capital of former Tsars and present leaders. Here was the "Great Village" of all Russia, the "assembler of the ancient Russian lands", of which the monk Philophey had written that it "embodies the great capitals of the world, Ancient Rome and that second Rome, Constantinople, for Moscow is the Third Rome and there will not be a fourth."

These thoughts came to me now in 1929. Moscow was to me a wonder city, in the first place because in it were centred the nerve ganglions of the first country to belong to the workers. Yet even to me, a Caucasian, its political history was exciting. Founded in 1147 by Yury Dolgoruky, the son of Vladimir Monomakh, in 1328 it was made the capital of the Grand Princes of that age by Ivan Kalita, thereafter fully to earn its appellation of "the assembler". By the sixteenth century it was recognised as "the ruling city" and remained so until 1713, when Peter the Great transferred the seat of government to Petersburg—a city literally founded on the bones of serfs, so many of them were forced to give their lives in its construction. On 11th March, 1918, the "Great Village" again became the political capital, at first only of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, but on 20th December, 1922, also of the "Union" of all the Soviet Socialist Republics.

Here, arriving at ten one morning, my first thought was to visit the Red Square.

Count Alexey Tolstoy in his *Prince Serebryany* has described the gruesome scenes of public execution enacted in that square under Ivan the Terrible; here stood gallows, headsman's blocks, a huge iron boiler swinging between metal posts, stakes for burning people to death, and a variety of instruments of torture which kept the assembled crowds guessing as to their precise use; it was the day of the slaughter of the hundreds of nobles who had revolted against the Tsar's authority, and such were the torments to which they were submitted that even the hardened folk of that time fled from the square, until Ivan ordered the people to be driven to attend. Here

now stood the sombre granite mausoleum in which the embalmed remains of the great liberator Lenin rested. An accumulation of history to excite the imagination of a newly-arrived young countryman.

The Red Square is not far from the Kursky station and so I was soon there. As I stood before the Kremlin, which borders the Red Square, my heart beat faster. Inside these walls were assembled the great leaders, the elder brothers of us workers; there worked Stalin—*primus* but essentially *primus inter pares*: I was not aware of any gulf dividing me from him. Though I would not wish to waste his time, I thought I would be well within my rights if I strolled through the famous Spassky Gate into the courtyard and waited patiently to get a glimpse of him. Indeed, my imagination told me, what more fitting than that I, a fellow Caucasian, should approach him and thank him personally for sending us our first tractor. Besides, had not Comrade Ordzhonikidze, in those far-off days in the Vladikavkaz hospital, invited me to Moscow and said that when I came I must, without fail, see him and meet Comrade Stalin? A polite phrase? No, I am certain even now that Ordzhonikidze meant it. In the early days of the Revolution it *was* conceivable for a young worker from the Caucasus coming to Moscow to be seen by one of the “great”.

Mastering my excitement, I approached the sentry and asked him which was the best way into the Kremlin. I can see today his outraged face as he rapped out “*Chavo?*”—“What’s that?” I was not used to such manners but I politely repeated my wish. “Got a pass?” he snapped back. I had never heard about a pass. “Then clear off and keep your nose out.”

“But Comrade Sentry,” I insisted, “I wish to go in.”

“*Chavo, chavo*, what’s that,” he snapped. “Clear off!”

“I advise you to tell me, decently, the way in,” I said.

“Off with you!” was his only reply, “if you don’t want to get this bayonet up your —.”

His rudeness left me flabbergasted. Surely this was not the way for Comrade Stalin’s sentries to speak. But while I gaped he pulled out his whistle and blew a shrill blast. A tall stout man in the uniform of a Red Army Commander now appeared, drew me aside and asked me to show him my papers. I had no papers. How, then, the officer demanded, could I prove that I was Tokaev, and not Petrov or Bakradze or Shapiro or who knew what else?

“In the circumstances, only by my word of honour,” I replied.

His answer again amazed me: “In Moscow words of honour have no credence.”

I commented that this was most regrettable, since without words of honour there could be no honourable social system (this was—and is—cardinal to my philosophy of life), and I again assured him that I really was Tokaev. “No use,” he said, “I shall have to detain you until we find out more about you.”

He smiled sourly and it did not take me long to realise that he understood quite well why I wanted to pass through the forbidden gates. Everybody, in fact, wanted to have a look at the leaders, and few people as yet realised that the leaders were already afraid of the people. The Revolution as I conceived it—a state of flux in which leaders and people were organically interconnected and could, even as individuals, discuss common problems together—was in fact already over. Once again there were the rulers and the ruled, but of that I was completely ignorant.

Finally the officer explained to me patiently that the leaders were overburdened with work and had no time to see visitors. He advised me to forget my childish idea. “Once and for all,” he said, “leave the men at the top alone; get them out of your head.” And with this avuncular advice I was allowed to go.

I was indeed very lucky. Two or three years later, quite likely I would have found my way straight to the concrete cellars of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs—the NKVD—and the onus would have been on me to prove that I had not intended to assassinate anyone. Many people have found this a lengthy task!

My youthful fervour having thus been curbed, I turned my mind to more practical matters. From the Red Square I made my way along the embankment of the River Moskva and, after wandering for about an hour, asked a woman who was sitting on a bench: “Citizenness, can you direct me to the offices of the Central Committee of the Comsomol?”

“How am I to know?” she snapped. Her ignorance did not surprise me, but her manner did—was everybody in Moscow so boorish? In Vladikavkaz people would at least have said, or somehow shown, that they were sorry they did not know.

But when, after a great deal more wandering, I at last discovered the Comsomol offices and gained admittance, I began to come to the conclusion that it was the function of Moscow to pluck out illusions root and branch.

I found myself in the room of a minor woman official named Yukhavina. She was ill-favoured, with hair cropped short like a man, dressed in a uniform of the *Jungsturm* type, of which the tunic, stretched and crumpled out of shape, was fastened with a greasy

military belt. The smoke of a cigarette dangling from her mouth made her keep her head tossed back and her eyes half closed.

All through the interview she slumped, her massive body sprawling over her desk, one elbow in the dead centre of the table while the other arm hung behind her over the back of her chair. Every now and then she pulled a grey handkerchief from one of her breast pockets and blew her nose loudly, like a cabby. Her grating voice was in keeping with her appearance.

She was, in fact, a typical "up-to-date" woman of that time, who had acquired "absolute equality" with men and the utmost contempt for "femininity".

Nothing broke the utter impassivity of her face. She called me a "roisterer" so glassily that I wished myself under the floor. I had a smooth tongue, she said, but for all she knew I was just a waster. Was I in the habit of drinking?

"What has that to do with my request?" I demanded. "I have come to get a new Comsomol card, not to answer for any failings I may have."

She declared I was a "backward type". Had I no political education at all not to know that a Comsomol had no right to any failings?

As she wished, I said, but how was I to get a new card? I shouldn't have boozed, then I wouldn't have lost mine. "I didn't booze," I cried, stung to the quick. "I merely drank one or two glasses of wine at a farewell party. It's the first time such a thing has happened to me."

"No Comsomol should cultivate such remnants of Capitalist psychology as farewell parties."

"Comrade," I said. "I am not in need of a lecture on bourgeois prejudices but of a membership card; how do I get it?"

"Not in need of a lecture? But that's exactly what you do need. Your revolutionary vigilance has been deadened, that is how you came to lose your card. We responsible officials are here to instruct young people like you, who go wrong."

After a great deal more of this I was curtly informed that she had nothing to do with the issuing of new membership cards. My indignation at her waste of my time set her off again: day or night it was the duty of a senior officer of the Comsomol to put a junior right. I really got the impression she was in deadly earnest and believed that here was one more provincial who would leave her presence wiser than he had come.

Of course, not all the women in the Comsomol were like this.

Far from it. I have good reason to know, for I myself spent some years as an officer of it. All the same it is a gruesome fact that until about 1935 there were a good many, and there still are some, though they are less frequent today. What is more, they were indeed expected to instruct and guide the young, and they succeeded to some extent in bringing the young women of the Comsomol down to their own level of physical and mental coarseness. They were an expression of one aspect of early Bolshevism, or rather of one element of Russian life for which the Revolution proved a breeding ground. There was much to excuse it. The Revolution had brought to the fore men and women who, through no fault of their own, were raw and uncultured. And yet, is it true that the poor, the workers, the peasants, were necessarily coarse? For all our faults, this was not a feature of our North Caucasian communities, simple and ignorant though we were; our women retained their dignity. Was it, I wondered, something that, together with arrogance, developed with the exercise of authority? I did indeed find later, to my mortification, that the whole Moscow headquarters of the Comsomol was tainted with an arrogance similar to Ukharina's; but as for coarseness—I had only to remember the woman on the embankment of the Moskva, or the many other people of whom I had to ask my way during my brief stay in the capital, to draw the conclusion that coarseness was extraordinarily widespread in this city.

I was never to forget my first Moscow meal. Ordinary restaurants were, of course, rare, and most people took their food in some kind of canteen, to which their work gave them a right. I doubt if in any capital in the world canteens are more primitive than these were in the Moscow of the twenties and thirties. I am not speaking of those of the great ministries or commissariats or military academies—such were excellent—but of those used by perhaps 95 per cent of the population—workers, small clerks, officials, students, ordinary citizens.

Picture to yourself a building to which the years had given a slight tilt to one side, with a plaster facing which had not been renewed or even patched up since before 1914; the entrance door bore traces of paint, but whether yellow, black or sky blue, it was difficult to tell; even the door handle had vanished to give place to two rusty bits of wire carelessly twisted into a loop. Such was the canteen in Pokrovsky Street, only a few hundred yards from the Kremlin, to which I came soon after leaving the Headquarters of the Comsomol.

There was no inscription on the door, so I waited in front of it to hear if the noise on the other side confirmed my impression that this was the canteen. All at once the door was flung open, crashing

into my face. My suspicion that, as Griboedov wrote a hundred years ago, there was a special stamp of boorishness on every Muscovite thus further confirmed, I flared up. "Steady, Comrade. You might have broken my nose. You might at least apologise."

"You gotohell," shouted the stout fellow who had just come out.

"Thank you very much, but I do think that you might say that you are sorry."

"Go to —," the expression was strong, and to my disgust the fellow flung away down the road.

As soon as I entered, my nostrils were assailed by a mixed smell of salt herring, fermenting cabbage, sour potatoes, and something else, indefinable. The ceiling was low and grimy, the floor was made of ill-fitting planks. There were no glasses, jugs, or table cloths. I took the first free place at a long table; before me was a veritable pigsty. On all sides were young people who had not shaved for at least three or four days, ill clothed and with unkempt hair, stinking of sweat sourness.

My right-hand neighbour was a particularly horrifying sight. Bent to within an inch of a bowl, he was shovelling fish soup into his mouth to the accompaniment of long-drawn-out groans and snorts. When the transference of the soup was complete, he smacked his lips a few times, drew his fingers through his greasy hair and looked round with the air of a conqueror. Then he tipped his head a trifle to the right bringing it down to about table level, and pressing the fingers of either hand to the respective sides of his nose, cleared this straight on to the floor. Nobody turned a hair; it was seemingly quite normal.

Facing me were two young men, apparently students from a Workers' Faculty. Their conversation, while they waited for their food, ran something like this:

"If I were you, Stepan, I'd shift to our doss-house."

"B—— your dirty doss-house, you're choc-a-bloc with —— and ——" (extremely indecent words for women). "You're a lousy lot of scum."

"You're a —— yourself. Your own dirty doss-house stinks of ——."

Let me say at once that in the Caucasus men can be quite as foul-mouthed, but for some reason I had imagined that Moscow would be above this.

Now arose the difficulty of my position. As soon as the over-worked and ill-tempered waitress grasped that I was a stranger, she turned on me:

"Beggar?"—"No." "Student?"—"No." "Moscow man?"—"No." "Then, what the . . ."

"You — with your Noes," shouted Stepan from across the table. "Can't you answer a question properly?"

I explained all about myself and immediately became the centre of attention. Stepan left his place and returned, dragging the chef by the arm. "Here's a Caucasian," he cried triumphantly, pointing at me, "and so you've got to find the Comrade some food. We all of us want you to. See?"

The cook smiled, clapped me on the shoulder, said he was sorry he could not find me a *Shashlyk* (a Caucasian grill), but I would certainly not go hungry. My appetite was, by now, rather diminished, but a few minutes later I was served with exactly the same meal as the "regulars".

It took me some time to discover that it is always rash to make hasty judgments about Russians. Now everybody in the canteen was delighted with the chef's kindness to me, and after the meal I left with Stepan and his friend Vassily as though we had lived under the same roof for years.

"And how does the worker fare in the Caucasus?" Stepan enquired.

"Badly, Comrade."

"So in your parts too it's — awful?"

"But surely the worker does not live badly in Moscow?" I said.

"Why, this is the Capital!"

"You'll see. You'll soon clear off back to your Caucasus."

"I don't intend to live in Moscow. I am on my way to Leningrad."

"It's all the — same," he said.

We went on talking and I came out with my simple-hearted argument: why did not Stepan and his friends complain to Comrade Stalin himself? To my amazement, they cursed Stalin and roared with laughter. What a simpleton I was. It wouldn't make the slightest difference if they complained except that they might find themselves doing forced labour at Solovki. "Things are different in Moscow now, my dear fellow, and that sort of talk is called 'Right-wing Opportunism'."

"I find it hard to understand you, Comrade," I said. "On the one hand you complain, and on the other you do nothing to improve conditions."

They said they were b—— if they cared. It was the job of the *nachalstvo*—the bosses—to see that the conditions of the workers improved.

But, I objected, had not Karl Marx said that the liberation of the working-classes was in the hands of the workers themselves.

"As for that," they said, "we're liberated already, but what the — do I want with liberation if my backside is bare and my belly empty?"

I couldn't understand any of it. Only a week ago I had taken part in bringing in a record harvest in the Caucasus and I was sure it was the same throughout the country. What had happened to the food supplies? Once again I advised my new friends to take Marx's words to heart.

"Here, Caucasian," Stepan said suddenly, "are you in the Comsomol?"

"I am. Why?"

"Then I've a word of advice for *you* to take to heart. Keep your mouth shut. Get me? You just stink of Right-Wing Opportunism."

I was too dumbfounded to say anything. It was not that I was frightened—my conscience was much too clear for that. I simply couldn't understand. Here were these Moscow students speaking insultingly of Stalin and yet putting up with the filthy fish stew at their canteen, telling me how bad things were getting and yet labelling me a Right-Wing Opportunist when I suggested what was surely the right way to go about setting them right.

It was only much later that I realised how widespread was this attitude in Moscow. In any Moscow institution you would find crowds of people bitter with dissatisfaction, but only here and there an isolated individual ready to make an effort in the struggle to make things better.

LENINGRAD

I FAILED to get my position as a Comsomol regularised in Moscow and soon left for Leningrad. The impression I carried away with me was of complete bewilderment, but in time my anger at the boorishness with which I had met gave way to a suspicion that it must be myself who was to blame. Illusions are hard to abandon: the genial, idealised Moscow of my dreams still existed in my imagination; perhaps all that had happened was that I had failed to find it.

The approach to Leningrad from Moscow is impressive. As the train moves north-east it steams through increasingly desolate plains, then suddenly plunges into the teaming environs of a great capital city—for Leningrad is indeed a great city and not an overgrown village like Moscow. In Moscow, town and country merge into one another; until fairly recently many "city" dwellers still lived in almost pastoral surroundings, along straggling streets strung with wooden houses set in their own yards and gardens, and small livestock could be met with within the city precincts; as against this Leningrad has always been exclusively urban.

The guard's voice called out: "Leningrad—October Station", and his voice seemed to ring with my own pride at being sent here, to the heart of revolutionary Russia. "Yes," I told myself, "Comrade Tokaev, you are in Leningrad, and it is the Soviet régime which has given you this magic opportunity." I had made the great leap from my sunny homeland to this northern citadel of world-shaking revolutions, the hearth of the famous rebels of history—the Petersburg from which the Tsars had directed the enslavement of my country and which was now the Leningrad of the workers and peasants of the whole Soviet Union. Hail Leningrad, once Petrograd, once Petersburg, hail, source of unquenchable spirit of revolt!

Is it odd to have been in love with a place? We of the second generation of the October Revolution could not but be filled with undying enthusiasm for this city in which in our childhood the Revolution had started. And here I was!

My first visit was to the *Plóshchad Vosstánia*—the Square of the Uprising. I felt that if I could lay my ear to the paving stones I would

hear the echoes of the thunder of the revolutionary cataclysm. I stared at these echoing stones, as if on them I could see the blood spilt in those tremendous struggles without which I would have been only a poor Caucasian land-worker, with no great future before me. Indeed, as I looked up at the monument in the middle of the square, and, about it, a circle of tram-lines, the gyrations of the red, single-decker trams, coming in from all directions and dispersing again, changed before my eyes: there in the heart of all this movement stood Lenin—or was it Trotsky—and the countless tramcars were the nation in revolt. The words of the revolutionary orators spread like streams of wildfire through the crowds; and then the whole scene turned into one vast centrifugal system; from the living brain centre the rays of new thought starred out into the vast spaces of the Union—to Karelia and the Far North, to Esthonia and to the Urals, to Belorussia and to Turkestan, yes, and southwards to Georgia and to the North Caucasus.

When, later, I told this vision to my brother Andrey, he agreed with me: "Yes, Grishko, this is exactly what did happen. From Leningrad, just like your trams, the waves of the great revolt spread. This is the initial centre of the world-wide revolutionary conflagration." I quote this to stress what Leningrad meant to us. Cities have their specific traditions, their nature, and though the administrative centre of the U.S.S.R. was now Moscow, this did not affect the position of Leningrad as the prime mover of the Revolution and the place which looked ahead, beyond the immediate events, or as the thinking organ of the country.

My first joyful moments of sightseeing were, however, followed by a comic and embarrassing incident.

In the train on the way to Leningrad I had been told by one of the passengers that, in the old days, one of the streets leading from the Square, the Ligovka, had been known in the Petersburg *argot* as "P.P.", or the Prostitute Prospect. Nobody visiting Leningrad, the man assured me, could fail to have a look at the "P.P.". His account of the red lantern institutions abounding in this street had intrigued me considerably, not because I was in search of prostitutes—in any case I was without a farthing—but as a startling remnant of Tsarist ways.

I found, however, a most respectable, broad thoroughfare without any sign of dissolution either in the buildings or the people's faces. Later I was to discover that restraint and moral propriety were among the outstanding characteristics of the people of Leningrad, who differed in this respect both from those of Moscow and of our

southern towns. But the sight of the Ligovka fitted so ill with the picturesque story I had been told so convincingly that, in my *naïveté*, I actually went up to a policeman and asked him—of course, as politely as possible—whether this was indeed the famous “P.P.”.

The policeman’s first reaction was one of incomprehension; he even drew out a street reference book and informed me that there was no street of that name in Leningrad.

“Oh,” I said, hardly able to suppress my laughter at the policeman’s ignorance of Leningrad realities, “but ‘P.P.’ is the *unwritten* name. It just stands for Prostitute Prospect; that’s what most people call the Ligovka.”

“Move on, citizen,” snapped the policeman. “There are no whores on my beat, and there haven’t been for a long time. Who exactly are you? Are you a seaman, or a docker?”

Common sense should have told me to do as he said, but I was stung by the suggestion that I was an uncultured seaman in search of women. So I began to argue, assuring the policeman that all I wanted was information. Instead of soothing the policeman, however, my explanations seemed only to anger him, and he told me again to go my way, this time adding an unprintable suggestion as to what I could do if I felt so bored.

Such vulgarity astounded me in a policeman on duty in one of the main thoroughfares of the great city of Leningrad, but it also aroused my argumentative faculty. I asked him from what school of boorishness he had graduated, and, as his language grew steadily worse, demanded his name and number so that I could write about him to his superiors.

Of course, I admit today that there was much in my behaviour that was silly. On the other hand, I still believed the various allegedly fundamental propositions of the workers’ state, such as that the public had the right and even the duty to exercise control over the administration. This policeman was a servant of the public, not its master; I would be wrong *not* to take steps against him for using such bad language in reply to a polite enquiry.

Instead of answering me, he acted exactly like the sentry at the Kremlin gate: he blew his whistle. Then, with his hand on his revolver holster (all Soviet policemen are armed), he demanded my papers. I had none.

In Tsarist Russia the police had been universally detested, and a constable trying to make an arrest was likely to be surrounded by a hostile crowd. I now witnessed the opposite phenomenon: there

was a crowd of onlookers who assumed automatically that I was in the wrong. Ironically, such unity of mind between the police and the public was, in itself, in accordance with my ideals.

Of course, I went on arguing about the policeman's duties to the public. "To hell with the public," he said—an outburst which again considerably troubled me. Now it was my tongue which lost its restraint, and in due course I found myself being examined at the nearest police station. The constable stated that I had no papers, that in broad daylight I had tried to find prostitutes, that I had called the Ligovka the Prostitutes' Prospect and, finally, that I had demanded *his* papers and had used foul language to him.

Now followed a dialogue which might serve as master mould for all such dialogues in the Soviet Union.

"Your name?"

"Tokaev, Citizen of the U.S.S.R., arrived in Leningrad this morning."

"Your identity papers?"

"I have no identity papers. They were stolen in the train."

"It is the duty of a citizen of the U.S.S.R. to have identity papers."

"I know. But mine have been stolen."

"Why were they stolen?"

"How on earth am I to know?"

"A citizen of the U.S.S.R. is obliged to have identity papers."

"I have no identity papers."

"Then you are not a citizen of the Soviet Union."

At this point I laughed. "Have you your registration slip?" the Inspector bellowed. "What, sir, is a registration slip?" "Every person (in fact he said every 'element') on arrival in Leningrad is under obligation to report to the head of the household and be put on the list of inmates."

"I have no home," I said, "consequently I have no household so how can I have a registration slip?"

"You will have to be placed under arrest," he said, "until we find out who you are."

I protested that he should find out first and, if necessary, arrest me afterwards. He informed me that the Police (the "Militia") of the Workers and Peasants did not need the advice of arrested persons as to how it should behave.

Then the Inspector proceeded to lecture me on the dignity and the history of the great city of Leningrad. And this at last brought the conversation back to "P.P." and roused me to insist vigorously that my only interest in prostitution was how to combat this evil—

this was, indeed, one of my great preoccupations—and that I would no longer put up with having my natural desire for information so grossly misinterpreted. I now demanded that, if he would not take my word for my identity, he should telephone the Zinovyev Communist University and get in touch with my brother. Actually, Andrey was out, but whoever answered the telephone immediately reacted to the name and was soon able to give the necessary particulars about me.

For the police, it was “about turn” at once, and I was free to go my way. Indeed they even apologised to me.

To conclude this incident, let me make it quite plain that I have not the slightest wish to pronounce any sort of general condemnation on Soviet officials or even on Soviet institutions. The officials merely do what they are told, and many of the institutions are, at least in their conception, very fine indeed—I say this having had ample opportunity to compare them with those of western countries. In this case it is not the theory that is wrong but the practice. Were it possible to enquire and to get honest answers, it would be found that most thinking Soviet men and women are extremely concerned about the individual and are most anxious that the system should be humanised.

And why, you may ask, can they not humanise it? The complex answer can perhaps be circumvented by a figure of speech: the U.S.S.R. has become like a threshing machine which a clumsy engineer has set at too high a speed; the constituent parts of the machine are not to blame if the grain is mishandled.

From the Square of the Uprising, to which I returned from the police station, I took the tram to Vassilyev Island. This is one of the principal quarters of Leningrad. Washed on one side by the Greater Neva, on the other by the Lesser Neva, and on the third by the waters of the Gulf of Finland, it is almost a town in itself, with many-storied buildings and numerous industrial concerns and institutions of the sciences and the arts. Planned rather like New York, it is crossed from East to West by three straight parallel boulevards—the “Bolshoy” (Great) or “Proletarian”, the “Central” and the “Lesser”. At right angles to these run some twenty-five equally straight-ruled “lines” or streets, numbered, First, Second, Third, Fourth and so on.

Here I had been directed to the students’ hostel of the Rabfak (*Rabochy Facultet*—Workers’ Faculty) of the Leningrad Mining Academy. It was a handsome eight-floor building, situated at No. 34 Fifteenth Line. After some enquiries, I discovered the office of

Comrade Belenkovich who, among his other duties, issued canteen cards, which in turn gave the right to a bed.

Belenkovich was a Belorussian, a man in his late thirties, a worker to the marrow of his bones. He was totally devoid of guile, a rough diamond, but completely frank and genuine. I am told that this is characteristic of the Belorussians. To Belenkovich, all the students under his care were one large Belorussian family.

I told him my tale. His first reaction was the same as everybody's—was not this a cock-and-bull story? I protested that it was not. "All right then," he said. "Look me in the eyes."

To my embarrassment, after looking in my eyes, Belenkovich shook his head solemnly and said that he could make nothing of them. I might be all right, but then again, I might not. He stroked his chin thoughtfully, then said: "Come on, show me those great paws of yours." He took my right hand carefully and examined it, and even felt it as if he were a doctor looking for the symptoms of disease. "Hm," he said at last, "your horny bits fit all right, and there's a slight odour of paraffin and oil. So I'm going to decide to regard you as '*svoy v dosku*'—'our own to the plank!'"

Svoy v dosku was a warm compliment. It was a term much in use at that time. If, for instance, a Party man were on trial by a Party Court, to say about him that he was a bit of a rogue but all the same *svoy v dosku* meant that he had made a mistake but was sound at heart.

So Belenkovich issued me tickets for board and bed and instructed the "house commandant", another student, to find me a bed in the hostel. This student conducted me to my dormitory. The house had once been divided into aristocratic flats and there was still an extraordinary atmosphere of well-being about it. The walls were thick, the doors and windows fitted well, the cornices were handsomely moulded, the stairs broad and of good stone. Once, no doubt, it had been beautifully clean and warm, with curtains and carpets and flowers, and uniformed commissionaires in the hall. How different now! From top to bottom, walls, floors, ceilings, stairs had all assumed the same uniform dun colour. The merciless breath of the Revolution had blown into every corner. Whatever mud was in the street was also inside. Why not wipe one's feet? But on what? And indeed why? The building was a communal hostel, and in 1929 the new culture was in its infantile stage, it had not become house-trained. . . . Responsibilities were ill-defined.

We came to the top floor flat. The door from the landing gaped open. The four rooms which had once been the home of one family

housed sixteen representatives of all parts of the Empire. The old kitchen was piled to the ceiling with remnants of furniture, empty cases, rusty bedsteads and heaven knows what rubbish. The water closet in which no water flowed was fouled beyond the limits of decency. There was, of course, no electricity in the passage.

The student brought me into a room where two pairs of beds stood against the walls. He pointed to one and said it would be mine. It was quite clear that it had been occupied, and that by a woman. "You needn't pay any attention to her," he said. "Turn her out if she comes. She's not a student." With this he hurried away, leaving me to examine my Leningrad lodgings.

In one corner was a large iron receptacle—or perhaps a spittoon, or perhaps merely a pot—full of crumpled bits of newspaper, herring-bones, tea-leaves and whatever else would have gone into a slop-pail. Under a small table near the window stood a bucket, and in this there were old boots, worn-out socks and under-linen. The ceiling was black with dirt; from it hung a naked bulb. The walls, the door and even the window frames were studded with nails on which was displayed the pitiful wardrobe of these four proletarians. There were no chairs and only two stools. The beds were low iron bunks covered with grey cloth which looked like tarpaulin in a goods yard. My curiosity prompted me to look under these covers; underneath one there was no bed linen at all, only a naked mattress, the seams of which were crawling with bugs. Two of the other beds did have sheets, though they were threadbare and filthy. The fourth, allotted to me, was relatively clean, with sheets and even a small pillow.

In one of the walls of the room were large folding doors which had once made it possible to throw two rooms into one; now they were nailed up, but the lock was missing and in its place was a hole through which one could see into, and be seen from, the neighbouring room.

I BECOME A STUDENT

IT WAS about eleven that night when my first room-mate came in. He was a thin, unshaven fellow in dirty workman's clothing, and with a fixed scowl. It was easy to see that he had come straight from hard physical labour, that he was half-starved, and that he could scarcely keep on his feet. How like the "factory slave" of the 'nineties depicted in our schoolbooks was this Soviet worker!

His glance at me seemed no more than an automatic reflex. Without so much as a "good evening" or even a "go to hell" he walked over to his bed, dropped a hunk of black bread on it, then slowly went out and came back with a galvanised iron pot of hot water. He then sat down and ate his supper—black bread and hot water, nothing more.

Unable to contain myself, I asked him how it was that in a long day's work he had not earned enough for a decent meal? He merely muttered: "What's that to do with you?" and did not even bother to look at me.

And after all, it was not my business. How could I even be sure that this man was not content with his lot? The country was in the throes of the Five Year Plan, it was laying the foundations of the new economy which was to bring about socialism. There was a general call for self-sacrifice, and was it out of the question that here before me was a man who was making his deliberate contribution to the triumph of an idea?

The bread and water finished, the worker, without washing or taking off more than his canvas tunic, crept under the coverlet, snorted to clear his throat, and fell fast asleep.

Soon after this came the other two men. Their names, I discovered afterwards, were Mitya Korshunov and Foma Kadyer. They were of a very different calibre. Korshunov was short, plump, lively and impudent; Kadyer was so tall that his feet dangled out of his bed; both were insatiable chatterboxes; and they had brought their girl friends with them—two dolled-up wenches.

At first this party turned their full attention to me: coming from the Caucasus I was expected to have brought dozens of flasks of

excellent wine, several roast fowl, pounds of butter and a lot of money. On learning, however, that I was literally a beggar, they produced their own bottle of vodka and all four took turns at tipping it up. I was not offered any, and though I would not have taken it, their lack of hospitality struck me as strange.

Then, with the utmost cynicism, the two pairs indulged in uninhibited horseplay, all this in front of a stranger and in a lighted room.

Towards one o'clock they quietened down. Now the owner of the bed allotted to me appeared. She came in without knocking and without looking at the others; clearly none of it was new to her. I hastened to explain to her the reason for my presence. She looked me up and down with scorn. Evidently she took me for another Kadyer or Korshunov. She was about nineteen, with pretty, regular features, remarkably fine-drawn eyebrows and a graceful figure. Her silence and the glance with which she received my announcement mortified me. She quickly took something from a small trunk and went out. I too hastened to leave the room. I had to get away from it all, even if I had to walk back to the Caucasus, anything rather than this foul and indescribably vulgar hovel.

Outside I walked slowly along the straight, level street lined with stately houses, my footsteps muffled on the wooden pavement. After a while I came out on the granite promenade bordering the Neva. This river is wonderful at night. It is broad and deep; moored to either side were the still, sleeping masses of ships of the Baltic Fleet; beyond them stretched the lines of many-storeyed buildings. I turned back upstream till I reached the Lieutenant Schmidt Bridge, and now for the first time I watched a scene familiar to all Leningrad folk: the huge bridge raised to allow the passage of ocean-going vessels. I feasted my eyes on this. I had almost begun to regret coming here, but this reminder of Leningrad's might, of its place as the north-eastern gateway of the Union, restored my balance.

I continued past the long and pleasing building of the Leningrad State University to the Republican Bridge, which owes its name to its position, for directly in front of it, on its far side, is the Winter Palace: I was standing at the spot from which, on the night of 24th October, 1917, the cruiser *Aurora* fired at the Government residence and decided the transition from five centuries of Tsarism to a social order such as the world had never seen. Nearby was the Admiralty with its famous gilded spire, and the striking architectural complex of the Academy of Sciences.

No, I told myself, I must judge Leningrad not by its Korshunovs

but by all this beauty. I must forget my setbacks and discomforts and enter deeper into this great city.

With such thoughts I spent the rest of the night on the embankment of the Neva; in time that stream was to become as dear to me as the turbulent Terek of my homeland. Then I returned to the hostel whence the students were already emerging, one by one, on their way to their studies. I followed them across the river, and, with my heart in my mouth, entered the large and imposing building of the Workers' Faculty of the Leningrad Mining Academy. This was my real destination. I took off my hat and saluted the building, saluted my own future, and saluted those, as yet unknown to me, who were to give me the knowledge and training of a modern man.

In the office to which I was directed I found a woman in her forties, named Artyukhina. She was kindly and civil. Her first question—the first question of a woman in the service of the Bureaucratic Soviet State!—was whether I was hungry! When she heard my story, instead of scolding me or lecturing me she encouraged me as best she could. Of course, she said, it was a bad thing to be without papers, but it would all be fixed up, and there and then she issued me with a temporary certificate, entered me in the register of new arrivals, and arranged that a permanent lodging should be found for me at the hostel. All this without any fuss or red tape! Had it not been for her official position, I would have flung my arms round her and kissed her.

Equally comforting was my experience at the Palace of Labour, the Headquarters of the Leningrad Trade Unions. There I was seen by a middle-aged man, Grigory Makarovitch Evseyev, a genuine former "Petersburg" worker and a typical representative of the revolutionary Old Guard. He had a perfect right to tell me off for losing my papers, but he did not do so; instead he calmly promised to get Vladikavkaz to confirm the details and, as soon as they had done so, to send me my new Union card. And then—most remarkable of all—he asked if I needed any cash. I replied that I was registered at the canteen and therefore had no need of money. "Very well," he said, "but should you find yourself in difficulties, do not hesitate to come and see me, and I'll do what I can to get you a loan."

These unassumingly human words instantly cleared my heart of the gloomy thoughts and forebodings which had filled it. With such people one could work. One could give one's life for men like that. These were genuine human beings, who saw others as human beings as well—not merely as numbered units entered in registers. These

two, Artyukhina and Evseyev, filled me with respect and pride for them, and for Leningrad.

As I left I was accosted by a young man who had been in Evseyev's office when I arrived. He held out his hand to me. "We must know one another," he said. "I heard enough to gather that we are fellow-countrymen. I am Volodya Fedotov."

Fedotov had arrived in Leningrad only a day or two before me, to study at the same college. We were not exactly fellow-countrymen, for his home town, Balashov, is not in the Caucasus but in the province of Saratov; still, we both came from the far south, and from Leningrad the distance between our homes seemed fore-shortened. We had certainly more in common by temperament with one another than with Northerners, and his generous way of claiming me at that moment was just the human approach of which I was in need.

In fact Fedotov and I both needed each other, and from that first meeting until his death from tuberculosis and starvation in 1934 we were fast and inseparable friends. Together we became "rebels" and there was no flaw in our loyalty to one another during those brief but tightly packed years of our comradeship. No shadow ever crossed our friendship. We shared our money, our triumphs, our failures, our joys and our sorrows, and even our clothes. We studied in the same class at the same desk; we went to the theatre and the cinema together, and even to the public baths. It became the standing joke that Tokaev and Fedotov were the "Union of Southerners in the Far North".

In Party matters Fedotov was my senior, he was already a member, but in political thought we agreed completely. Like myself he was interested above all in the question of personal morals, in family life and the decencies of human behaviour. Neither of us could understand the trend, which then still existed, to consider "free love" as progressive.

We were both keenly interested in the workers' conditions of life. Fedotov was a great investigator, and he used to take me with him into the workers' quarters of the city, and even into the hovels in which many workers lived.

Basically it was our tenet that there could be no sound socialist society until the conditions of living of the workers were improved. A sound society required men and women who were healthy in body and mind, and we did not believe that such people could emerge from slums. Together with this went our firm belief that looseness and vulgarity in personal relationships made a good community

unthinkable. Not that we wanted to go back to the primitive notions about sex and home life which survived among many of the older workers, but neither did we agree with the loose standards which the younger people had taken over from the decadent strata of the urban populations of the Tsarist days. We believed in the establishment of new standards, which should continue what was good in pre-revolutionary ethics, with a new respect of the sexes for one another. This, we thought, could be achieved by education.

We knew, however, that to build the new community of the future we must study the existing conditions; and we knew that to demand new standards of behaviour from others we must live up to them ourselves, and set an example.

We were very young, very naïve, immensely self-assured. But at least we studied our subject as well as we knew how, both through "field work" and from books. We also took part in debates and read papers on these matters, gradually assuming the attitude of experts. And very soon we found ourselves grousing at the leaders—Stalin, Molotov, and Kirov, who was then the Party Chief in Leningrad—picking holes in their policies, and criticising them, often quite openly, for their inattention to what we considered essentials.

For we soon came to the conclusion that these three men were leading the Soviet Union along the wrong path. They were crudely reducing everything to a struggle against "the vestiges of capitalism in the consciousness of man". Whatever underhand thing a man did, whether deliberately or not, the official bureaucracy labelled it as a "vestige of capitalism". This we considered a vulgar oversimplification.

We thought too that they were forgetting the fact that each man has his own mind and his own heart, his own view of life and his own sensitivities; that it is utterly wrong to regard people as a mass of fools, only to be held in order by innumerable regulations; there are times when all a man needs is a kindly word—not to be dragooned into behaving according to the rules.

For these ideas we were laughed at and booed, and labelled as demagogues with a middle-class outlook. Our views were said to be tainted with petty bourgeois liberalism and an attempt was made to forbid us the use of the students' tribune.

The argument used against us was that all questions of morals and ethics should be considered solely from the standpoint of the *class struggle*. There were no absolute or "abstract" ethical laws or principles, the only behaviour which was moral was that which led to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and

brought Soviet society nearer to communism by destroying capitalism. Communist ethics were the class struggle, and the class struggle of the proletariat was communist ethics. What Fedotov and Tokaev preached was sheer heresy, for they were replacing the class struggle by the weapons of "opportunist persuasion"—explanation and "prophylactics".

Some people argued against us that education itself should consist in the merciless crushing of the class enemy. The communist moral law was an entirely new system of social ethics, and those who infringed it in any way must be sent to prison or corrective labour camps. It all fitted together: a man comes late to work—send him to prison, to teach him; he comes to work unshaven—prison; he lets his tongue run too freely—prison; he fails to attend a meeting—prison. Indeed a kind of society *can* be constructed by such methods—Stalin and Molotov have proved it.

We continued, however, both with our researches and with our "preaching". One of the objective examples of the kind of thing we were up against happened to be the girl whose bed I was "given" on my first night at the hostel.

Varya was a child at the time of the Revolution. Her father was an engineer in one of the large Leningrad factories. Only a few days after the October Revolution there began a mass drive on Vassilyev Island against what, with savage irony, the régime called "no longer people". This was the term Gorky had once applied to the down-and-outs of capitalist society, but it now described such people as Varya's father—a "creature who was once a man" but who was no longer expected to exist, and who was forced to live "underground" hiding his identity.

After a time Varya's mother received a letter from her husband; he had been arrested. She set out to take him clothes and food, leaving Varya alone in the flat; she never came back. Nobody could tell Varya what had happened to her parents. For a few days kind neighbours looked after her; then the flat was officially requisitioned and the authorities placed Varya in a home already overflowing with orphans, in another quarter of the town. When the NEP came into force, Varya was put in the care of the proprietor of a small restaurant. At fifteen she graduated to a small hotel, where a scoundrel turned her into an additional "attraction". From this place she escaped, to wander from pillar to post, trying to find work, until, as the "daughter of a bourgeois", she was officially classified as unsuitable for employment. Wherever she applied, the answer was the same: "No daughters of bourgeois wanted here." In 1928 somebody

took pity on her and got her a job as a chambermaid at the students' hostel. At first she had a small room to herself, then other maids were crowded in with her, and finally, she was driven out to sleep in whatever bed was temporarily unoccupied.

As the "daughter of a bourgeois" she became the prey of every unscrupulous male, who did not even feel obliged to pay her for the use he made of her. In time Varya hardened, lost all womanly sensitivity and took her position for granted.

Fedotov and I set ourselves to rescue her from this shameful life; we believed that no one had the right to be indifferent to the sight of a young girl being turned into a living corpse. We enlisted the help of dear old Comrade Evseyev, and in the end got Varya admitted to full rights of citizenship. She was taken on at the Uritzky Tobacco Works, lodged in a women's hostel, and later allowed to join the Trade Union. In the following year she began to attend a technical college. Some time after Fedotov's death I was able to fulfil my promise to him by taking her to Moscow, where she trained as a doctor. Today she works at the Moscow City Clinic. She is married and has two children. The Soviet Community is enriched by the existence of this fine family. But how would it have been benefited if Varya had merely been punished for her immoral way of life, for the beginning of which she was in no way responsible?

FIRST STEPS IN THE OPPOSITION

I AM OFTEN asked whence and when so earnest a young Comsomol as I was, received his first impulse to oppose the Stalin régime. The question is not without interest: there has been more than one opposition movement inside the Soviet Union, and it would be interesting to know how they all began and in what circumstances they developed. But for myself I find it hard to reply. Most likely there never was one single initial impulse, and it is indeed doubtful whether any opposition movement which arose out of one chance impulse could be serious and lasting. Opposition needs to grow naturally, organically; to be strong a tree needs many feeding roots.

What I *can* say is this: it was Leningrad that gave my views an oppositional stamp and to some extent provided them with a definite direction. It was in Leningrad that I made the acquaintance of men who were really in an opposition movement—which is a very different thing from occasional grumbling or safe armchair talk. In Leningrad too I first read printed anti-Stalin literature. And there, on the shore of the Neva, I made my first semi-underground speeches.

But all this was very different from belonging formally to an opposition. I was *in opposition*, yes, but that is not the same thing as being fully aware of it oneself, that is to say, realising that one's views have developed from criticism *within* the movement into hostility *to* that movement. Although Fedotov and I maintained the attitude I have described, we did not regard our activities as in any way part of an oppositional struggle. In the first place, our heresy, after all, concerned only one aspect of the life of the community; secondly, any oppositional struggle is, ultimately, a struggle for power, and there was not the slightest shadow in us of a desire to enjoy power in the State; the notion never even entered our heads. In fact, all that we did developed gradually, spontaneously. At that period there were never any plans or intentions—only small promptings. Let me give some examples.

One day we were informed by the administration that the shortage of public funds created by the Five Year Plan and the over-all

difficulties of industrial development made it necessary to cancel the bursaries of the first-year students at the Workers' Faculty. We received this announcement with calm as befitted understanding citizens of the Soviet Union. Our first thought was that, since industrialisation required it, we must accept this privation. It meant that we had to work to keep ourselves, adding physical to mental labour, and Fedotov got a job as a hand at the Uritzky Tobacco Works while I became a stevedore at the Port of Leningrad.

I earned five roubles a day, a reasonably good wage for that time, and I managed fairly well. Hard as the nightshifts were—many a sack and case of goods I carried on my boxer's shoulders after a full day's studying—I was served by my tough physique, and my excellent memory enabled me to master the contents of complicated lectures and manuals in the minimum of time.

But not everyone is born with an iron constitution. Many of my comrades were forced after a while to leave the Faculty, and others carried on only at the cost of considerable suffering. Obviously this was not the way to provide the country with a qualified body of industrial engineers: there was a danger that, instead of well-grounded men, the University would turn out people who had mugged up their subjects on the surface only. The numskulls who thought that they were speeding up socialism by cancelling the bursaries were doing harm and I concluded that their policy was sabotage, conscious or unconscious. In the end I aired my views in front of a large group of dock labourers.

"And who do you think you're calling conscious or unconscious saboteurs?" one docker asked me.

"Those responsible for cutting off the bursaries."

"But that's the *Party* and the *Government*."

I answered, without a prick of conscience, that there could be fools and saboteurs in the Party and in the Government.

"You ought to be put on trial for such criminal talk," the docker declared, and another backed him up: "We shall have to clear you out of this yard, Comrade Tokaev, to stop you sharpening your teeth with such anti-Soviet babble."

This is one of the unbearable things in the Soviet Union: utter one word of criticism and whether you are right or wrong there is immediately someone to label you as anti-Soviet. In my own profound conviction my "babble" was intended to *consolidate* the Soviet system, yet here was I being accused of anti-Soviet talk, and not by an NKVD man but by a simple dock labourer who had every reason to share my attitude.

Very soon my opinions became known to the Captain of the Port and to the Port Party Secretary, and both began to treat me as suspiciously as if I were a direct agent of Wall Street or the City. The Party Secretary actually summoned me and warned me: "Either you stop this anti-Soviet agitation or you'll find yourself outside."

I said that anti-Soviet agitation was the last thing I indulged in, and that I objected to his language: he was treating me as though he were a pre-revolutionary landowner and I a serf. It was the Soviet State that employed me and it was idle for him to talk of sacking me.

Genuinely outraged, he told me that I was forgetting where I was. Not at all, I replied, I knew that I was in the Soviet Union, and that it belonged to me as much as it did to him.

My naïvely-taken stand shows to what extent I still believed in the earlier ideas of the Revolution: in their light it was impossible for there to be a Party boss, still less for that boss to threaten a worker on his personal authority.

The secretary lost his temper and continued to threaten me. I answered just as fiercely and accused him of employing spies to report on me. I was convinced that I was right, and that he had not the power to dismiss me.

These romantic dreams were soon dispelled. Charged with sedition and undermining confidence in the Party line, I lost my job. It was lucky that the notion of the "people's enemy" was not yet invented, and that since I was only in the Comsomol and not yet a Party member, I was merely sacked.

Once again good Comrade Evseyev came to my assistance and got me a job in the testing shop of the Electrocable Works. But here too I was found to be below the standard of political ethics required under Kirov, then First Secretary of the Leningrad Party Committee and one of the worst tyrants of the Stalin régime.

One day when we were peacefully talking over our midday meal of black bread and salted herring I said that Kirov's predecessor, Zinovyev, was a more educated man and had therefore made a better Secretary than Kirov, an uncultured dictator; under Zinovyev it had been possible for Leningrad men to pass resolutions of lack of confidence in the Party Committee, while now even the least criticism was being cauterised.

Be it said to the honour of my workmates, I aroused no fanatical opposition by my statement and when, nevertheless, I was denounced—for there were already spies everywhere—and charged with "counter-revolutionary agitation", they minimised my criticism so that once again it ended for me in nothing worse than the sack.

Yet another time Evseyev found me a new job; now it was at the Tobacco Works where Fedotov was already employed, and there we stayed until we were both expelled from Leningrad.

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It would be utterly wrong to believe that at this period I was an anti-Communist. Far from it. Indeed, at that very time, both Fedotov and I were actively employed by the Party as propagandists in factories, introducing the workers to the ideals of the Revolution and its tactical requirements. My *Lichnoye D'elo* or personal dossier, was an excellent one. For every Comsomol and Party member is shadowed throughout his life by a dossier about himself, a file which gradually thickens and includes descriptions of him, details of his origin, his work, the enquiries made about him, and any faults officially found with him. As he moves from place to place, the dossier follows from local committee to local committee, so that wherever he is employed, it is in the hands of the nearest Party office. Since my dossier contained much in my favour—my early years, my progress, my energy, my enthusiasm—I was entrusted with this work of lecturing, while Fedotov was given a similar task.

Thus it was that in the winter of 1929 we visited workers' clubs and spoke of current Party policy, and the work of the Government, the Trade Unions and the Comsomol. These were not, of course, *extempore* talks, but carefully prepared and written out speeches, which had to be checked by our Party and Comsomol bosses. We were required to confine ourselves strictly to the broad outlines of policy.

Fedotov hated this strait-jacket even more than I did. He hated lying, twisting, or concealing facts; he detested chewing the cud of other people's ideas. He liked to talk plainly and in his own way, and his lectures turned again and again into stormy discussions. The clash with the authorities came when he suggested that the conditions of the workers were actually worsening. Of course, this was unforgivable, even though he had been arguing that sacrifices must be borne to achieve the Five Year Plan as a necessary condition for the further leap ahead. The workers were not to be trusted with so complex a reasoning, they must be assured, however absurd it might be, that their conditions were improving *all the time*.

There was a Party enquiry which inevitably brought me in. Whether I shared his views or opposed them was irrelevant, for we were a team, and in the U.S.S.R. a relation answers for a relation and a friend for a friend. I was required to make depositions against

my friend, to provide the material on which to condemn him. Naturally, I refused. My refusal naturally inculpated me further. By refusing I voluntarily assumed a shared responsibility for his "crime", and we were both struck off the list of propagandists. But this was only the overture.

The Zinovyev Communist University, where my brother Andrey was studying, was the most important centre of Marxist ideas; it was attended at that time by outstanding members of the Party, the Trade Unions and the Comsomol, as well as by representatives of "fraternal" parties abroad. It was here that, unnoticeably from outside, counter-Stalinist ideological work was developing. Here, leading younger Party men and women from all over the Union were exchanging ideas, examining the writings of the founders of the Revolution and forecasting the effects of the policy implemented by Stalin and his men. Out of this grew up the dramatic struggles of the subsequent years which were to result, suddenly, in the assassination of Kirov and the suppression and slaughter that followed it.

This University and Andrey's student hostel became a genuine school of opposition for me. Andrey himself was already ill, and early in 1930 he was sent to the Crimea to recover, but by then his fellow-workers had become the teachers of Fedotov and myself. I mean that they guided and inspired us, helped us in our studies and directed our research—not that they trained us as members of an opposition group. Strange to say, we never regarded them as a definite opposition. To us they were merely leading political workers younger than the founders of the Revolution but senior to ourselves, loyal communists whose ideas might conflict with those of Stalin on this or that point, as was only natural (so we believed) in a democratic party where discussion about ways and means was necessary. It still did not occur to us that Stalin was entrenching himself in a position of infallibility, that the rank and file of the Party could no longer voice their views, or its prominent members wield any influence.

After all, there were men and women who had held responsible positions in practical field work. They knew how the people lived *since* the Revolution, they had first-hand experience of the impact of the measures taken by the Government and could judge of their recoil.

They themselves never suggested to us that they were in opposition, and they did not attempt to enlist us in their group. I believe that they were primarily interested in perfecting the Party—not in wrecking it—and if by asking us to certain meetings they in fact introduced us to oppositional activities, it was because they

believed in the interchange of ideas and the dovetailing of the generations. The flow of ideas was not all one way. We came from the more restive parts of the Union, we were still on fire with revolutionary zeal and unversed in political hypocrisy, so that what we said could be taken as a genuine expression of unprejudiced observations. This is why we interested them; was it not a Bolshevik principle to assemble facts and to find a scientific way of handling them? When I told them about conditions in the North Caucasus, I felt that they were eager to learn about the life of a remote part of the Union, with its difficulties and its potentialities, so that they could form as sound a view as possible on what future policy should be. I believed that I myself was making a useful contribution to the Soviet régime, and I still believe that so far from using us in the interests of a cynical struggle for power, they were acting honestly and worthily as reliable members of a *living* Party group, as distinct from that petrified bureaucracy which, as I learned later, wanted at all costs to suppress the truth.

Through them I met prominent Leningrad Party officers, including those from the Smolny Party Headquarters and the staff of the *Leningradskaya Pravda*.¹

Among the papers I have managed to preserve from this period is a talk I gave at a meeting at the Zinovyev Communist University. Nothing can illustrate my attitude better than the following fragment:

“Here in fact is what is happening in the North Caucasus. The people are watching the death throes of the NEP with a deep anxiety about the future. The shops are empty of goods. The canteens reek of the monotonous diet of black bread, pickled cabbage, salted herrings and rotting potatoes. The peasants are forced into the collective farms against their will, and the harvests are turning into terrorist battles between the authorities and the people. Savage anti-Soviet feeling is growing up. There have been spurts of partisan fighting in the Karachayev-Cherkess, the Kabardino-Balkarian, the North Ossetian, the Ingush, the Cheshen and the Dagestan regions as well as in the Kuban and Terek Cossack lands. In the Cheshen country there is wholesale slaughter of the workers by Red Army men. Is the Workers’ and Peasants’ State to wage war on workers and peasants? What could be more dangerous and

¹ The Smolny a famous girls’ school before the Revolution, had been the headquarters of the Revolution in 1917 and ’18, and was now the Party House in Leningrad.

counter-revolutionary? The Central Committee should immediately put a stop to such arbitrary action, or we shall lose our right to call ourselves the Workers' State."

When a member of my audience commented that the sooner Stalin's dictatorship was overthrown the better, I was horrified: this was the opposite of what I had been pleading for. I had meant merely that the pressure should be lessened, there should be a safety valve, precisely in order that the Soviet régime should be strengthened and preserved. And such were my earnestness and my lack of political gumption that I would have made the same speech had Kirov himself been present.

Some days later I was invited to the editorial office of the *Leningradskaya Pravda*, where a Party man whose name I prefer to omit asked me to repeat the gist of what I had said at the meeting. He listened attentively, but refrained from all comment. It was not till some years after this that I learnt his underground rôle.

My speech created a stir. I was warned by my comrades that I ought to be more cautious. Nevertheless, during the following month I accepted an invitation from a girl who was a fellow student to a party at the Boiler and Turbine Institute Hostel in the Sosnovka district, where many educational establishments were centred. I was not acquainted with my hosts—this in itself shows how little I knew of the elementary precautions of underground work—and it was only by luck that I spoke very little at the party. I had hardly a notion of the danger I was running by not concealing my thoughts. My conscience was clear. I had not the slightest wish for power and I took at its face value the Party's encouragement of criticism and self-criticism: I believed this to be a condition of a healthy community life.

Among the guests I met Konstantin Dmitrievich Voronov, who is still living and flourishing, a first-class scoundrel, an *agent-provocateur* and a Judas. The little that I said in front of him might have been spoken into a microphone, so exactly was every word capable of a damaging interpretation reported to the relevant Party and Comsomol authorities. It was my fortune that my audience at the Zinovyev Communist University had included no traitors so that Voronov's denunciation did not include my speech. Nevertheless my position and Fedotov's were now definitely undermined.

Not a word I had said about the Caucasus in front of Voronov had been anything except the truth. But now I began to understand the situation better. While I thought that I was serving the régime

by revealing the facts, there was nothing the régime desired less than to have these facts acknowledged or discussed. The country was torn by internal contradictions, but my attempt to contribute to their solution, despite the loyalty of my intention, was in itself an oppositional act, because it was an act contrary to the will of Stalin and his men, and hence, according to the Stalinist logic, an act of disloyalty to the Party and the régime.

All this may explain my difficulty in answering the question: whence had come my impulse to oppose Stalinism? It would be easy in fiction to describe some moment of revolt against Stalin or some secret initiation into an underground movement, and to say: This was the beginning. But in reality it is not always other people or doctrines, or even our own conscious intentions that turn us into political fighters; sometimes it is merely the erratic zigzag of our own life with its incomprehensible corners. I had no conception that my effort to assist the régime by speaking the truth would land me in the opposition, and still less idea that many of the people I knew who made public speeches in defence of Stalin's interpretation of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat were already engaged in underground anti-Stalin work. I had simply revealed myself, without knowing it, and the consequences followed.

The storm broke in the summer of 1930. I was summoned by the Secretary of my branch of the Comsomol, and asked to explain my view on the position of the working class in the Soviet Union.

By this time I realised what was afoot. I replied with more caution than I had exercised hitherto: "To have an opinion on this, Comrade Secretary, I would need official data, which I lack."

"But surely you are furnished with information?"

"By whom, Comrade Secretary?"

"By those *criminals*," he cried, "whose will you serve, the leaders of *Right-wing Opportunism*!"

I protested calmly that I had nothing to do with such men, and asked him why he had sent for me.

"Because," he said, "you, a representative of a national minority, have been granted the opportunity to live and study in this famous city, but you are without gratitude, you are behaving swinishly (*po-svinsky*), carrying out the tasks given you by the Right-wing hypocrites who are enemies of our Party and our Government".

Words cannot describe how outraged I felt. That I, who had consistently propagated the ideal of the brotherhood and equality of peoples and races, and had been proud of my country for living up to this ideal, should now be treated as though it were not my

fatherland at all, as though belonging to a national minority put me under a special obligation of "gratitude", deprived me of the right to think and speak of what concerned the Union as a whole, and empowered this petty Party boss to use the word "swinishly" to me!

For once I controlled my temper. Without a word I turned and left the Secretary's office and went straight to the office of the *Leningradskaya Pravda*, where, seething with rage, I told the comrades what I thought of the reactionary-imperialistic behaviour of this Stalinist fanatic.

A few days later I received a note from Artyukhina telling me and Fedotov to report to the District Police (Militia). Fedotov thought that this was at last the result of my speech at the Zinovyev Communist University. He said we ought not to worry as we had committed no crime; as usual he was remarkable for his steadiness and calm.

He was, however, mistaken; we were tackled about lesser matters. The officer in charge of State Security spoke to us courteously. I never learned his name, but I got the impression of a civilised person (not all Soviet police knock out people's teeth and pull guns on them as in foreign anti-Soviet stories). He was sorry, he said, to have an unpleasant duty to perform. The police had information that we had taken part in Right-wing Deviationist propaganda at the Electrocable Factory and the Uritzky Tobacco Works. Nevertheless, they had come to the conclusion that we were not professional anti-Soviet agents, so they felt obliged to warn us of the dangers ahead of us if we persisted in our mistaken road. They knew we were young workers, and it was not in the interests of the Party to ruin our lives or to rob us of the possibility of completing our studies. "But Leningrad does not suit you," he said. "It would be best if you left it of your own accord and went somewhere else. Without any fuss. Without expulsion from the Party or the Comsomol. Let's settle it decently."

We were both scarlet with mortification. What a blow to all our plans! It was a catastrophe.

Fedotov boiled over. "You are expelling us! What crime have we committed?"

"Please don't get excited," said the officer. "Criminals are arrested. We don't try to *persuade* them to go away."

I declared that I would not leave voluntarily. I loved Leningrad and I had done it no harm. I had come to Leningrad on legitimate business, sent by my Trade Union, and I wanted to stay there.

No, he said calmly, I could live and work elsewhere. Of course,

the police officer knew the real position. After all, Zinovyev had also protested, had also loved Leningrad, and yet he had gone "of his own accord" to the Far East to build railways!

We were advised in detail what to do. We were to apply for release from the Leningrad Workers' Faculty. Artyukhina did not need to see our letter to know what had occurred: the Director of the Faculty had informed her and the plans for our expulsion had been made before we were summoned by the police. We knew that she sympathised, and we knew that there was nothing anyone could do.

Thus, in 1930, "of our own accord", and without unnecessary "fuss", Fedotov and I left the Uritzky Tobacco Works and the Leningrad Workers' Faculty, and set out, southwards, for an unknown new life. Leaving from the October Station, we saw many things more clearly than the day we drew into it. But we left with the firm conviction that justice would be done and that the great Northern City would see us again.

MOSCOW MANNERS

IT WAS a late afternoon in July when Volodya and I cast a final glance at our beloved Square of the Uprising and dragged ourselves to the October Station. How we hated leaving this great city of Leningrad! Already, as we stood on the platform, we had a despondent feeling that we had ceased to be Leningradians. Not one of our many friends had come to see us off. Some were too important to be allowed to compromise themselves, others were working, while the small fry, no doubt, wished to avoid meeting our other "friends". There indeed was one of them—the very security officer who had suggested our leaving. Had he come to see that we did leave?

That we were leaving Leningrad "voluntarily" was in itself a concession—better than being arraigned. Nevertheless, it placed us in considerable difficulties. The fact that we had bursaries from our Trade Union meant that we were not independent students assisted by a scholarship, but emissaries of the Union, almost soldiers sent to a particular post; our "voluntary" departure was therefore desertion, and unless our status was officially altered we were marked as undesirables wherever we went.

Eventually we drew in under the great iron vault of the October Station in Moscow, and our first thought was food. This was no easy problem for poor ravenous students deprived of papers and ration cards. For, of course, nearly all the restaurants in Moscow were "closed restaurants", that is to say, they catered for a limited number of clients whose food tickets entitled them to get their meals at this particular canteen.

We did try one such canteen, but the manageress could not help us; all she could suggest was that we should manage "somehow"—*kak-ni-bud*—a Moscow expression which in time we came to know extremely well; it was rich in implications, among them that a way out of any difficulty existed if one used one's imagination. In the end our hungry wanderings round the station brought us to Domnikovskiy Street. This was an astonishing neighbourhood, where magnificent buildings backed on to slummy timber shacks, where

taste and vulgarity, respectable people and down-and-outs jostled each other; here co-existed Asia and Europe, the new Moscow order and the old Moscow disorder. Here in front of one restaurant after another we found miserable specimens of humanity who had gone into "their" dining-rooms and bought their portion of food only to bring it into the street and resell it to any number of the Moscow flotsam who, like ourselves, lacked the necessary papers. Here were "former people"—remnants of the pre-revolutionary rich, scrapped entrepreneurs of the NEP period, Party rejects and dismissed Government employees—all eating the food of other unfortunates to whom a few roubles were worth more than a full stomach. In this way we got our dinner.

That same day we went to see Belinsky, a Party member and a member of a Leningrad opposition group. He immediately decided that we should go with him to a "friend" of his, Lazarev, who was in a position to assist us. There we witnessed a curious scene.

Lazarev was about twenty-five; born in Moscow, he had received a secondary education and now held a fairly important post in the Moscow Comsomol Committee. He had a small flat in Spiridonovka Street. By 1930 standards, he was neither rich nor poor—a little boss, comfortably off. He wore cavalry breeches of exaggerated cut and a khaki para-military tunic, in imitation of the highest bosses of all.

Belinsky, who was on familiar terms with him, described us to him as "two comrades from Leningrad" who had been "badly treated for their convictions", and needed and deserved a helping hand because they shared "our" views and "our" ideals, and were, in a word, "our brothers."

Hearing this our hopes rose: Belinsky spoke as if he expected Lazarev to take immediate steps to get us admitted to the College in Moscow and thus reinstated as normal members of Soviet society. Lazarev, however, without bothering to look at us, merely said in a cold voice: "I don't understand why these 'brothers' should need my assistance if they have such clean records and no political delinquencies behind them."

Belinsky boiled over: Lazarev's tone was an insult not only to us but to him, and he required an immediate apology. Lazarev remained cold. He informed Belinsky that he would not allow brawling in his flat. As for Belinsky, he must have lost his revolutionary vigilance to bring such dubious characters as ourselves to his flat.

Here were the two paths of the Soviet dichotomy; indeed, perhaps it is a dichotomy present in the Russian people, a people rooted in

orthodoxy. For every "Russian soul"—a soul of broad kindliness and humanity—there was a "Stalinised soul", a mind coldly regulated by official prescripts.

But now Moscow hit back at Moscow. Belinsky told Lazarev that he would see to it that *his* house got a spring cleaning, when the high quality of his Communist honour would be plain to all. The way in which he spat out the word "honour" made it clear that he knew what he was about. To our astonishment, at the first sign of attack the "boss" changed colour. With nervous gestures he assured him that he would do everything he could to assist us. But now Belinsky would not even accept his aid; and we ourselves preferred not to be under an obligation to such a character.

We soon learned that Lazarev was busy living down his own recent "oppositionist" past—this accounted for his extreme orthodoxy—but evidently he had had no idea that Belinsky knew of this.

We left Lazarev hot with anger. Fedotov, a Cossack—but one who felt himself a Russian—said this was what the whole Russian nation was coming to look like to foreigners, and Belinsky agreed. In the next ten years I was more than once driven to such bitter thoughts. But the reason why the picture looks so ugly is not that the Lazarevs outnumber the Belinskys, nor that between them there are not—as everywhere—many people who are neither heroes nor fanatical bureaucrats, but because in the tense struggle between the two extremes it is the fanatics who now have the upper hand.

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It was our bad luck that it was the unpleasant side of Moscow manners that struck us first.

One evening we were queueing for bottles of soda-water outside the Youth Club of the railway workers in Klanchavsky Street. For a time everything was quiet and orderly, then, when only about half-a-dozen customers were left, the supply of soda-water began to run out. Immediately there was pandemonium. The next in the queue—the one who would receive the last bottle—was a young man in a clean collar and a bow tie. The man behind him was a powerfully built youth who was roughly dressed. He broke into protests. Was this what *we* had spilt our blood for? Was this the result of *our* Revolution? ("We" were the proletarians.) *We* had set up the Soviet régime, and *we* should drink its soda-water—not soft-handed gentry with "puppies" (Moscow slang for bow ties). What had we come to when dandies like that pushed their way in front of

the proletariat and snatched soda-water from its rightful owners!

Fedotov walked up to the orator and told him to stop; this resulted in a stream of obscenities being directed at us. Just look at them, collars and ties and tidy hair and polished shoes—obviously *bourzhuys*—"that" for them. "That" was an indecent gesture, followed by a string of "Mother curses", a method of swearing which consists in taking the name of the victim's mother in vain in the most unspeakable way. The extraordinary thing was that nobody seemed in the least surprised by this exhibition in what, after all, was a leading club in the capital city.

For once I was the cooler of the two of us, and with some difficulty restrained Fedotov. The girl at the counter handed the bottle of soda-water to the man in the bow tie, and now there really was a din and a scrimmage, from which bow tie emerged holding the bottle aloft, only to have it swept from him by the hooligan and smashed on the cement floor. Proletarian splintered glass and soda-water splashed in all directions.

All at once losing patience, I leapt at the hooligan (I was strong and hefty in those days), got him down, and knelt on him. "Ham!" I addressed him by the traditional Russian name for an ill-mannered boor, "where do you think you are? In the land of Old Man *Makhno*?"¹

This was the extent of my contribution, but I had counted without "Bow tie". Bow tie was a wolf in sheep's clothing; taking advantage of my having pinned down his enemy, he landed a powerful kick just where it took the prostrate man's strength completely away. The victim lost consciousness—indeed I thought that the kick had killed him. Bow tie then slipped outside and told the police that a murder had been committed in the club; a few moments later I was taken in charge "on the scene of my crime".

Fortunately, it was not long before my "victim" came to and stood up, apparently quite unharmed, to resume his tirade. Fedotov had followed Bow tie and now brought him back. To my astonishment he not only denied having kicked the hooligan, but flatly even denied having informed the policeman!

"Don't talk such rot," said the policeman, "of course it was you."

"Rot yourself," Bow tie insisted. "I've never met you, on my Leninist honour. Please don't plague me with this business, I'm very easily upset."

¹ Makhno was the leader of the Ukraine anarchist in the Civil War and "Old Man Makhno's Land" was any place in which there was no established public order.

In the end, after more floods of bad language from the hooligan, the matter was cleared up. It had been definitely established that no one had been killed and the man-handling and the abuse were beneath the notice of the police.

But now Fedotov buttonholed the two-faced young dandy. He was intensely curious about the psychological causes of events: without a knowledge of them how was it possible to cure social ills? Just *why* had Bow tie lied to the policeman?

"What's it to do with you?" snapped Bow tie.

Fedotov explained that we were strangers, from Leningrad, and we wished to understand Moscow ways.

"Oh, from Leningrad, are you? Well then, it's simple. Don't poke your nose into other people's business—is that clear?"

"Quite clear," smiled Fedotov. "But don't lose your temper. Just tell me why you did such a dishonest thing."

The man looked at Fedotov with scornful surprise. "If you're one of the honest ones," he said, "you are in the wrong place in Moscow."

The policeman who stood by heard all this without turning a hair, but we were deeply impressed. This, we felt, was the true answer. There was something in the Moscow air that accounted for all this, the fighting, the foul language, the sudden violence breaking out between the two men who were not even drunk, and the passivity of the police who, in Leningrad, would never have remained indifferent to such a breach of the public order. All this, and Bow tie's treachery, as well as the engaging frankness of the hooligan who answered the policeman's questions quite truthfully, were a part of Moscow life.

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So was another incident which took place a few weeks later. We met and made friends with Ksenia Mihaylovna Orlov, a girl of twenty who was a Comsomol member and a student at the Higher Chemico-Technicological School. Ksenia charmed us by her pretty face and chestnut curls as well as by her cheerful openness of character and by her qualities of generosity and innate grace. Her laughter made you feel that life was worth living.

She invited Belinsky, Fedotov and myself to her parents' *dacha*¹ and we spent the whole day there. Her mother welcomed us warmly; she knew my homeland and this made a further link between us.

The fly in the ointment was Ksenia's father. Orlov was an engineer

¹ Out of town summer cottage.

employed at an important technical centre in Moscow. As soon as he came home in the evening he began to hold forth on political themes, flaying the leaders of the Right-wing Deviation. Rykov was a hypocrite, Tomsy a conspirator, Zinovyev a swine, Kamenev a cynic, Uglanov a blockhead; as for Bukharin—Orlov got so excited that he banged on the table—he was the protector of *kulaks* and NEP-men, a fox licking up to Stalin while its tail wagged encouragement to Stalin's enemies.

Belinsky believed that people who talk like this merely love an argument, and he had soon argued Orlov into a corner. But this was not at all to Orlov's taste; he considered himself one of the Old Guard—he had been a Party member since 1920—and did not relish having a younger man get the better of him. To make matters worse, while he was arguing, Belinsky had doodled a clever caricature of Stalin and Bukharin marching towards Socialism loaded with books, but also guns, rifles and machine-guns.

When Orlov caught sight of this he began to hector. What were things coming to if young men came to his house to make Right-wing caricatures under his very nose? Did we perhaps hope that he would join us in our anti-Soviet propaganda? If so, it was in vain, he was an orthodox Marxist. "Ksenia," he cried, "how often must I tell you to be more careful who you bring to the house?"

Belinsky answered back sharply. Orlov leapt to his feet, pointed to the door and told us to get out and never to show our faces again.

Some ten days later Orlov handed to the local Party branch a full statement on Belinsky's "anti-Soviet propaganda", asking for severe measures against him. Belinsky was indeed summoned to the Party office. He was not expelled—this was only 1931—but he was certainly put through the mill.

When it was all over I called on Orlov and asked him point blank if it was not true that he himself indulged in anti-Soviet propaganda of precisely the kind of which he had accused Belinsky.

"And what are you in all this?" he asked. "Your friend's avenger?"

I assured him that I was not, it was merely a question of common humanity.

"So you and Ksenia have been spying on me!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Nonsense," I said.

"Then how do you know about my anti-Soviet talk?" he asked, his uneasy eyes telling their own tale.

So my guess had been right! The orthodox Stalinist *did* dabble in anti-Stalinist talk. Now he was no longer shouting or threatening, but defending himself and trying to find out how much I knew and whether we intended to accuse him to the Party. . . .

* * * * *

Indefatigable on our behalf, Belinsky at last found a way for us out of our difficulties. We were put directly in touch with the officer of the Central Comsomol Committee to whom our Leningrad comrades had written about us; we shall call him Bocharov.

We told Bocharov of our experiences in Leningrad and in Moscow. "You are right," he said. "Moscow doesn't like you—people without a status or a secure position on the hierarchical ladder. Now you are in the Kremlin's own preserve you must learn how to conduct yourselves. You must be careful in your choice of friends. You must learn the arts of cynicism and poltroonery; you must agree with your political bosses at every step. Keep 'eyes front' but see all round you; in Moscow you will need the scent of a dog, the hearing of a wolf and the eyesight of an owl. Keep those things which your proud Caucasus and Don steppes have taught you and Leningrad has confirmed in you in your hearts; but if you open your hearts unwarily, you must expect only humiliation and danger. If you learn these rules you should be all right."

A day or two later Bocharov took us to see a friend of his, a highly-placed official in the Moscow Police Headquarters ("the Central Administration of the Workers' and Peasants' Militia"). Even now I cannot mention his name. It was not till some years later that we learned his real views: he dealt fairly with the Stalinists as a duty, but he assisted anti-Stalinists out of conviction. In no time at all he had conjured up an official decision quashing our "voluntary" removal from Leningrad and transferring us to Moscow in a normal way.

Handing us our papers he asked us what we were planning to do.

"Get back to Leningrad," I cried, full of fire.

"I shouldn't do that," he said gravely. I could see that he was worried. "I do not advise you to do that. I do not advise it. . . ."

We were naturally impressed by his insistent warning. What was he hinting at, we wondered? Bocharov would say nothing at the time, but later he told us that our return might have been harmful to some of our Leningrad comrades.

Making sure that we followed his advice, Bocharov rang up an official of the organisation which managed the Workers' Universities

and asked him to come round. He was a stranger to us but a friend of our protector. In a few days, thanks to his connivance, we were directed to the Administrative Department of the People's Commissariat of Education, where we were interviewed and passed on to the Administration of the Workers' Faculties of the Heavy Industries. Here at last an opening was found for us, and we were instructed to resume our studies at the Rabfac, named after Rykov, which was attached to the Moscow Higher Technical College (VMMU).

At last we were once more students. We even had an official address in Moscow—"Rykov Rabfac VMMU"—and we were allotted quite good quarters at the students' hostel which was near the Kremlin.

* * * * *

But only a few weeks had passed when late one night there was a knock at our door. Fedotov opened it an inch. It was a telegram for me:

"Am dying without having seen you. Farewell. Be prudent. I have faith in you. Greetings to Volodya. Take care of our mother. Your Andrey."

Andrey had been more than a brother to me, he had been my friend, comrade and teacher in one. Worn out by work and strain, he had returned to the Caucasus; but he had gone there too late—even then, as I learned later, he would not have left Leningrad if this journey "for his health" had not been imposed on him, as our own "voluntary" exile had been imposed on us. He had been a passionate revolutionary idealist, thirsting for friendship and brotherhood among the nations of the world. Time and time again he had interposed himself between the ordinary humble worker and arbitrary authority. Everywhere he had pleaded for more humanity in the relations between the administration and the people. All his life he had struggled for the social and national liberation of men. His reward was to be labelled "bourgeois nationalist" and "Right-wing Opportunist". Now he was dying in a remote village—for not even a bed in a hospital had been found for him—without a single one of his comrades beside him.

Very early the next morning, Fedotov and I called on Nikolaev, Director of the Workers' Faculty.

This was a thick-set man with a big nose and a small moustache, a career politician whom only the random play of events had swept

to his responsible position. His self-confidence was bolstered up by the gulf between him and the proletarian students under him, but he was prouder of his standing in the local Party Bureau than of his work as the head of a large educational establishment.

Fedotov handed him my telegram. He glanced at it and gave it back. "Why," he asked pompously, "do you come to waste my time? I have my hands full—faculty business, Party Bureau business, conferences, reports—and you bring me this telegram!"

Fedotov started to explain, but he interrupted him. "Nonsense!" he cried. "What outrageous prejudices you young men have! Since when, I'd like to know, do Soviet folk waste their time on pointless journeys, just to bid farewell to the dying? Off with you, back to your studies."

"*Man, be thyself*," Rousseau had said. What was Nikolaev trying to be? The answer is simple: not a man but a member of the Party Bureau and a big shot Director.

Now I myself applied to the Secretary of my Comsomol branch, Ivanov, and asked him to speak to Nikolaev. "Death-bed affairs are not my province," he replied. "I have more important work to do educating the young in the spirit of the Party of Lenin and Stalin."

"But surely you can do your work and still help me, Comrade Ivanov. Please speak to Comrade Nikolaev."

He was outraged. "Comrade Nikolaev knows what his duties are. You say your brother is dying? Well, all right, he can manage that without you."

Yet Nikolaev was not to be blamed too harshly. He was only doing what he had been taught, what regulations ordered him to do. For the Soviet Union was ruled by a new Trinity: Stalin, the Party, the State; this left little room for personal emotions. Had I come to Ivanov about some service to these three, he would not only have spoken to Nikolaev, he would have gone to see Stalin himself: *salus publica suprema lex*.

* * * * *

Five days later I received another telegram. My brother had died. I felt profound isolation. Moscow became a hideous, soulless agglomeration of stone. I too placed the public weal above my own good. But I could not believe that any human society could be built upon anything but the human individual and the family. I now saw clearly before me two diverging roads which humanity could follow, one that of a mechanistic utilitarian society, which exalted the State and scorned the personal rights of the individual, the other governed

by the principle: "Man, be thyself." It was for this human ideal that I would strive. This was in the marrow of my bones. If I were faithful to it, I should never be parted from the beloved brother whom I had just lost.

MOSCOW THE THIRD ROME

MOSCOW IS more than a city, it is a way of living, the Russian way of living, and only years spent in it as its citizen can give anyone a true notion of the special "Moscow stamp" which, according to Griboedov in his *Woe from Wit*,¹ is on every Moscovite from head to foot. No diplomats' reports, no journalists' accounts, no malicious anecdotes or pæans of praise can teach foreigners what Moscow is nor with what language to speak to it. In Moscow it was almost useless for me to talk the language of Leningrad; how much less useful would it have been to talk that of London or Paris! Molotov's "noes" are merely the expression of a mentality completely different from that of the West. When one has lived in it for years, Moscow becomes comprehensible, but only then.

In the early thirties it was a rapidly expanding modern city, as well as the traditional capital of the Soviet Empire. Its growth was indeed spectacular. At a pace unthinkable in other countries it changed physically, clearing slums, expanding; whole blocks of old houses were replaced by splendid buildings, narrow winding lanes were straightened and broadened into magnificent thoroughfares. Today Moscow has no less than 2,260 libraries (with a total of sixty-five million books), sixty museums, one hundred colleges, thirty theatres—some of them world-famous—the largest Academy of Science in the world, an Academy of Medicine with twenty-five large research centres, an Academy of Agricultural Science with thirteen research stations, an Academy of Architecture, an Academy of Pedagogy and, among many others, an Academy of Ballistics. Even though culture and science in the Soviet Union are understood in a strictly Stalinist sense, so that not so much as a finger is allowed to stir outside one pattern, all this development represents solid and considerable material progress.

Moscow takes great pride in its institutions, but its pride has deeper roots. Its authority throughout the Union is overwhelming and the tradition of this goes back many centuries. Since the early

¹ *Woe from Wit*, first published 1825. Trans.

days of Russian history it has played a vital and commanding part over an increasingly vast area, and its own history is closely linked with that of Russia's victorious struggles against foreign enemies.

Indeed, to the average Russian, Moscow is perhaps above all the glorious result of these struggles. It is the Moscow of Prince Alexander Donskoy who in 1380 destroyed the army of Mamay, two hundred thousand strong, and thereby took the first step in the liberation of Russia from the Tartar Yoke, and it is the Moscow before which Napoleon's armies were defeated. It is true that in 1610 Moscow was occupied by the Poles, but within only two years their forces were beaten by the Russians under Minin and Pozharsky, whose achievement is commemorated in the Red Square by a fine monument bearing the inscription "from a grateful Russia". In the first days of the Revolution there were those who smiled as they read this inscription, for at that time Tsarist Russia was regarded as the "watchdog of European and Asiatic reaction", but nobody would dare to smile now, because since then Stalinism has declared itself the heir to Russian history. Almost uninterruptedly for a century and a half, Russians have breathed the spirit of 1812, the spirit of Borodinó which is known to every schoolboy of the Stalin age as one of the great glories of his country's past, and of phoenix Moscow, burnt down only to consume its enemy in its own fire and to arise again, an Eternal City. Centuries ago the claim was first made that Moscow was the Third Rome—two Romes had fallen, Moscow was the third and there would never be a fourth.

Today this claim is echoed by Molotov's saying that all roads lead to communism of which the citadel is the inner Kremlin of Moscow.

Moscow *is* Russia in a way that no other city "is" the country of which it is the capital. No wonder that Russia was once known abroad as Muscovy: who would ever have thought of calling England "Londony" or France "Parisy"?

At the same time Moscow dreams of being—mystically or politically—the capital of the world. It has been the heart of "Holy Russia", and it is so still to the Russian masses who have passed straight from this conception to the new Stalinist conception of what is holy. It has ruled—and it still rules—over the Russian masses and the Russian lands. More than a hundred years ago Belinsky wrote of it as the most truly national of all the cities of Russia, "rich in historical associations, stamped with the seal of consecrated antiquity. . . . That is why nowhere else does the Russian's heart beat so powerfully."

Today the Russian's heart still beats most powerfully in Moscow, for to the associations of antiquity have been added its triumphs in the past decades. Its tradition of dominance within the Russian Empire has done Moscow harm, breeding in it an overweening sense of its own importance and a blindness to all points of view other than its own. The more recent triumphs of Moscow have confirmed that pride: the wider the sphere of Moscow's influence the more unyieldingly narrow and arrogant its view of itself and of the world.

The first change which the Revolution brought to Moscow was to make it, not only once again the official capital, but the capital—the brain, the nerve-centre—of the Third International, that organisation which has been responsible for the training of the cadres of the Stalinist forces abroad. "Just as previously," wrote Stalin in his *Questions of Leninism*, "Paris served as refuge and school of revolution for representatives of the rising bourgeoisie, today Moscow is the refuge and school of revolution for the representatives of the rising proletariat." Fair enough—provided that the word "proletariat" is taken cautiously, for many are the adventurers who nowadays usurp the name and the authority of the "proletariat" and the "people".

Up to the dissolution of that body in 1943, Moscow was the centre of the intrigues of the Comintern and of its innumerable betrayals of the interests of the working class. There were, of course, men in the pre-Stalin Comintern who were genuinely convinced that they were setting up an earthly paradise. But these were the people whom in the thirties the Stalinists were busy labelling "enemies of the people" and "foreign spies", while they made heroes and "revolutionaries" of career men and professional Quislings such as Walter Ulbricht and Vylko Chervenkov. One of the vilest qualities of Moscow is its capacity to turn real men into nonentities and to inflate nonentities into "great men".

Another important change in recent years has been the concentration in Moscow of so many legislative and administrative functions. Moscow is the seat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and this in itself is sufficient to exercise a decisive influence over its climate. In addition, there are the Council of Ministers, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the Central Committee of the Comsomol, the Central Council of Trade Unions and the many other subordinate bodies of administration and control. Psychologically more important still, at the heart of Moscow is the inner citadel, the Kremlin, the temple of the central divinity—Stalin, about whom until yesterday all else turned. This

alone, for the fanatics of orthodoxy made of the vast sprawling town with its streets, trams, buses, underground, railways pointing to all corners of the Union, something more than a city—it made of it a huge church. The very air which Stalin breathed was different from the air of other cities, and those who were privileged to breathe it were inspired to an unequalled intensity of devotion.

Finally, in the last thirty years, more than in any other period of its history, Moscow has made good its claim to be the capital of many nations and of many countries. Between 1918 and 1948 Moscow has become the capital—in one sense or another—of the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaydzhan, the North Caucasus, Moldavia, Belorussia, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finnish Karelia, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenia, Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizia, Poland, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Tana Tuva, the Mongolian People's Republic, China, North Korea, Sakhalin, and a large portion of Indo-China. None of these areas was under the sceptre of Moscow in 1918; all of them acknowledge Moscow's supremacy today. Only three countries on which Moscow has laid its hand have succeeded in shaking it off: Greece, Finland and Yugoslavia.

How does the average citizen of Moscow view this expansion? He has been taught by Stalin that the Soviet Union is the long sought for and at last discovered form of world political and economic union. (Cf. *Questions of Leninism*, pp. 52, 102, and elsewhere.) According to this teaching Eastern Germany has not been mastered by the U.S.S.R., it has been liberated from the capitalist yoke. This is the theoretical basis of the "justified pride of the Moscow man" (as Molotov has called it) in the policy of conquest. The citizens of Moscow are taught to regard the rôle of world policeman to which Moscow lays claim as a sort of white man's burden.

In practice, however, throughout these years, the people of Moscow have become accustomed to triumphs watered with the tears of others. I put this on record with a heavy heart, for I too have been a citizen of Moscow. I grew to manhood in its schools and universities and I too have dreamed of a world federation—though of a *voluntary* federation of free, brotherly, and equal nations. My dream has always been of Europe and Asia united in a family of peoples where the very term "Mister" would gradually give way to the greeting "brother" or "friend". Moscow is very dear to me, and it has hurt me to see it lose its soul and become the most arrogant city in the world.

Of course, there are others who thought and who still think like me. The population of Moscow does not consist solely of aggressors:

it contains its own poor, its humiliated and oppressed, as well as those who not only support but derive personal benefit from the policy of aggression. But it is my belief that never in history has a policy of conquest been carried out consistently and successfully without, by and large, the support and the corruption of the masses as a whole.

How often, witnessing some Moscow scene of rejoicing in a triumph of aggression, have I not been reminded of the example of Ancient Rome. There too, wars were waged, officially in the interests of the *pax romana* but in reality for the crude reason that conquered countries were a source of supply of material goods and of cheap slave labour. With time, the sight of slaves fighting in the arena became a favourite amusement of the Roman population and the pleasures of loot and rape a necessity in the lives of the powerful.

I recall the incidents in the Red Square after the victory over the Finns at Vipuri in 1940. The Square and the adjoining streets were packed to overflowing with men tossing their caps high into the air and cheering deliriously at the slightest mention of Stalin. Similar manifestations of delight accompanied the occupation of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Bessarabia and Bukovina. The peoples of Europe were groaning under the Nazi yoke, but the population of Moscow rejoiced in the fruits of conquest. Later, in 1945, in the ruined music halls of Berlin, the Soviet victors revelled in the entertainment provided by half-starved Germans singing, strutting and grimacing because to refuse would have been to die of hunger.

This indeed is the logic of conquest, the dialectic which governs the conduct of victors. The victors are always right, the vanquished are always wrong, and the rightness of victory includes the right of despoiling the conquered. To the Soviet soldiers who found themselves in the occupied countries this was even a duty encouraged by the authorities. "Do you want to help your country? Then bring its enemies low." Thus every Soviet soldier carrying away a looted German radio set felt that he was assisting his country, for he was bringing some of its enemies still lower. I doubt if there is a single well-to-do flat in Moscow where members of the upper or middle *élite* do not repose at night on German, Czech or Polish rugs, mattresses, upholstery. It would be absurd to deny that there are strata of Soviet society which have consciously and directly benefited by the Soviet conquests.

As for the rank-and-file Soviet citizen, all this is as much his misfortune as his fault. He has been drawn irresistibly into the destiny of his country. It is my cautious belief that no less than

four-fifths of the ordinary people, with the slightest encouragement, would be prepared to hate not only wars but even acquisitions. They do not actively hate for a variety of reasons. To some extent the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam Conferences set a sort of seal of right on the Kremlin's policy. At home, literature, plays, films constantly extol the greatness of Moscow and its progressive rôle. Money and energy are poured out unsparingly on mammoth nationalist public monuments. Moscow, the régime centred on Moscow, above all Russia and the Russian people are praised to the skies. The power of Moscow's mailed fist and the vanity of opposing this "Third Rome" are unceasingly demonstrated. All roads lead to Moscow, where everything of importance in modern civilisation has been invented, and "we" are about to endow humanity with the greatest happiness ever known. Thus it is increasingly difficult for Russians to resist the temptation to act as a "master race".

History shows that peoples pay for the crimes of their governments. From this there seems to be no escape, and before the Russian people lies a hard choice: either to support the Stalinist successors of Stalin and tomorrow take the consequences, or by hostility to them today to absolve themselves from responsibility for their rulers' crimes. But the difficulties of the Russian people should not be underestimated. Never before in their history had the rulers in Moscow perfected such instruments of mass control as they possess and wield today.

I once had an interesting conversation with Orlov, the engineer who had denounced Belinsky. I was still a stranger in Moscow and everything in Orlov's conduct puzzled me. His turning us out of his house shocked my naïve notions of the courtesy due to guests. That he should suspect his daughter of spying on him for the benefit of a stranger seemed to me ridiculous. His charge of dishonourable conduct against Belinsky—who was the soul of honour—added to my bewilderment. And then—why denounce people at all? Was not the Soviet Union even in those days sufficiently like an army barrack for one not to try to make it even more so?

The curious thing was that at heart Orlov agreed with me. But he explained that the demands of Party honour were paramount. If a Party member observed any activity hostile to the Party there was no other course open to him except to report it to the Party. This was only right and fair to the accused: if a member was slipping into deviation it was only proper to try to bring him back into line.

Since then I have seen this attitude spread through Moscow and from there throughout the country. I have heard many explanations

of it—down to the suggestion offered me the other day by a prominent European journalist that all Russians were born scoundrels and informers! Only the Russians, he argued, could have put up with Stalin; they have never known anything but tyranny and therefore are not subject to ethical restraints; look at their age-long tradition of denunciation, treachery, enslavement and wholesale destruction of minorities.

Certainly I would be the last to approve of the acts of inhumanity in Russian history, but I know the Russian people too well to subscribe to any such generalisation even if, as a revolutionary democratic liberal, I did not regard all such assertions as invariably untrue and mischievous. No country is wholly good or bad; no people has treachery "in its blood". I have known many Russians go through spiritual hell to resist despotism, and my closest and most loyal friends—Fedotov and Belinsky—were in the fullest sense Russians. As for Vlassov, whom my journalist cited as an example of characteristic treachery, his existence proves nothing more against the Russians than that of Quisling, Laval or Haw-Haw proves against Norway, France or England; even if there had been "hundreds of thousands" of Vlassovites (as this journalist asserted) they would have to be set against the attested loyalty of the millions of the Red Army, the defence of Stalingrad, the heroism of Moscow and Leningrad.

No, the reason for the behaviour of the Orlovs must be sought elsewhere. Just as any retrograde view of society divides people into two sharply opposed classes, so Stalinism divides humanity into honourable and dishonourable, progressive and reactionary, decent and disreputable; the important point is that in each case the first term is identified with *absolute loyalty to the régime*.

The touchstone of whether an action is honourable or dishonourable is whether it is *approved*, and what is approved is, exclusively, that which serves the Soviet régime. In the same way "progressive" comes to mean that which is calculated to spread Stalinism in the world, and a "patriot" is one who develops the maximum of hostility to any divergence from Stalinism. Thus a crudely utilitarian ethic has come into being which serves as the basis of all judgment of values.

"From the point of view of Communist ethics," say the Soviet writers Rozenthal and Yudin in their official work on the *Capitalist System*, "only what aids the destruction of the hated features of the bourgeoisie, of the old capitalist world of exploitation and poverty, only that which goes to build the new, Soviet Socialist order, is

moral and ethical. Soviet patriotism is the most profound manifestation of a new ethic, a Communist ethic, a new psychology of man. Soviet patriotism is the highest stage of moral behaviour and ethics in man and society. Purging the mind of man of vestiges of capitalist ethics, the Soviet Socialist system has formed and developed new ethical values in the human character: loyalty to the leader, to the Soviet homeland, loyalty to one's native Party, and loyalty to the Party and the Government."

There is not the slightest ambiguity about this teaching. Grasp its message and you will grasp the reason for the conduct of the Orlovs.

What the Western world still fails to understand is that by now Soviet propaganda has had time and means to see that *everybody in the Soviet Union has learned the lesson*. It is useless to try to measure the U.S.S.R. by old yardsticks. Here we have a new social-political structure which can only be understood and dealt with by new methods. It is useless to complain that what Soviet Propaganda teaches is false. Of course it is false, but that does not prevent the millions from believing it. The task is to *prove to them* that the whole monstrous concept is false. Until this is done Stalin's successors will never be short of men and women who *out of profound, honest conviction*, will act as cynics, scoundrels and informers. What else is there for the Soviet man to be convinced of? He has no other mental, political or ethical food, he has only one line of conduct to choose "from". An informer in the Soviet Union is not a police "nark" or an agent used only for convenience; he is a man who feels he is a hero and who is willy-nilly admired by everyone.

All this today has become almost "self-evident", but it was not so to me in 1932. Coming from the Caucasus and from Leningrad and brought up on an older system of ethics, I found it startlingly unfamiliar. So did many other people round me. The foundations of the new religion were then only being laid, and many Communists in the Soviet Union still believed that the existing values would be elevated—not replaced by those of a crude utilitarianism. Orlov was the representative of a completely new era.

When I argued with him, he started by asking me whether I thought Belinsky was of greater value to society than he was. When I explained that this was irrelevant, that it was the act of denouncing as such that I regarded as infamous, he raised his eyebrows and informed me—a younger man who "still did not understand"—that I failed to see things in their proper historical perspective, that my mental horizon was too cramped.

Since then such phrases have become common currency. A

man who deviates from the Stalinist code is not necessarily an "obscurantist" or a "capitalist". He may be merely "small-minded" and "ill-read in Marxism-Leninism". The remedy for this is more intensive "ideological educative work", and the intensification of such work *ad nauseam* is the one thing that a Soviet citizen can be most sure never to be without.

STUDENTS' COMMUNE

ESTABLISHED AS students, that is to say, on the lowest rung of the intellectual ladder, Fedotov and I found ourselves members not only of a students' hostel, but also of one of the Students' Communes which at that time still existed. The Communes were an embodiment of the early idealism of the Revolution—an attempt to realise Communist principles in full in a small community, while the country at large was still being socialised. In such a Commune everything was held in common; all material goods were pooled and shared in strictly equal portions. The stark simplicity of this principle filled me with enthusiasm.

The Students' Communes had been set up on joint instructions from the Central Committee of the Comsomol and the Central Council of Trade Unions; ours had been one of the first to be established. We had a President (a fellow student), and under him a Treasurer, a Minister of Supplies, a Minister of Hygiene (baths, hairdressing, laundry) and a Minister of Culture and Education—this last post was for some time held by me.

Only "clean" elements were admitted to the Commune, that is to say, sons and daughters of workers or peasants; the only exceptions were children of Party, Comsomol or Trade Union officials who might be of bourgeois origin. Nearly all of us had State bursaries which provided us automatically with our ration cards; all this went straight to our Treasurer, Smirnov, and covered the Commune's basic expenses. From time to time a Trade Union made a small contribution in money or in kind, and this was always very welcome.

There were about three hundred of us, of whom roughly a hundred were girls. We were housed in two buildings; in mine we were four, five or six to a room, the other had larger dormitories with as many as sixteen people in each. Naturally the men and women had separate dormitories.

Our life was regulated to the smallest detail. The refectory was a moderate-sized basement lumber-room fitted out with the bare essentials of tables, benches, crockery and cutlery. The cooking was done by two women who worked for minimum wages and board,

assisted by the student whose turn it was to peel potatoes, fetch stores in a hand truck, help with the washing up and—most important of all—be responsible for refectory cleanliness.

There were three meals a day—breakfast, dinner and supper—to which we were summoned by a bell. Lateness was not permitted. Altogether discipline, enforced by the Commune itself, was strict. Every morning a duty officer went through the hostel to see that everybody was up and on time for his lectures, there was another round during the homework period—to see that everybody was at his books, and again to check that all the lights were out by midnight. A roll of attendances at lectures was kept as well.

Universal rationing had been introduced throughout the Union in 1930. Even visits to the hairdresser and the public baths were by coupon. No member of the Commune was allowed to go more than a fortnight without a bath; this was a basic rule. Washing facilities at the hostel itself were limited; the washroom had neither bath nor hot water, and was shared by men and women alike; the water-closets were at least separate, but they were extremely primitive. Laundry was regarded as a personal responsibility.

Over all reigned a stern, puritanical idealism; after my arrival this was strongly influenced by Morelli's *Code of Nature*, which, under my supervision, every member of the Commune studied. The relations between the sexes were regulated strictly on Morelli lines. In those days there was much talk of free love, but we maintained that this theory was an end product of the decay of bourgeois society and in no way acceptable as a part of our new ethic.

Eccentric as our way of living was it had the advantage that its strict egalitarianism suited our poverty and made it easier to bear, while during the years of famine (1931 and 1932) our collective organisation did at least ensure that we all got regular meals.

In addition, the Commune was a school of good manners. Most of the students came from what had been the lowest rungs of society. In their families such observances as, for instance, daily shaving for men, were not customary; with us, on the contrary, it was considered bad manners not to shave, and newcomers were subjected to gentle persuasion. This part of "education" fell under my care. The ideal of shaving was one thing, however, and to maintain a sufficient supply of razors was another. Safety razors were still almost unknown and the old "cut-throat" kind were in short supply. The small number I managed to obtain from a Trade Union were soon hopelessly blunt and nothing would put an edge on them, and an immediate fall in "good manners" became apparent. It was heart-

breaking; what was the use of insisting on clean boots, darned socks and jackets without holes in them if above them appeared a stubble-covered face? The Treasurer refused to hand out a single rouble for new razors, but fortunately the Trade Union again helped us out.

We were poor but we demanded culture. The acquisition and distribution of free tickets for theatres, concerts and the cinema was thoroughly organised. Scouts did the round of the box offices and the tickets were then handed out in strict rotation. Naturally this meant that you did not choose the show you went to or the day on which you went; as for taking a girl to the pictures, such an expression of individual whimsy was not to be thought of. Even if two tickets for the same show fell to a man and a woman student, it did not matter at all if the pair were not suited to each other or if either were longing to go out with someone else. In our phalanstery, which was regarded as a sort of blue print of the world of the future, our individuality was to be ignored in all communal matters. To suggest that you preferred to sit next not to Varia but Daria was to exhibit something worse than an undeveloped mind—it amounted to a show of bourgeois—that is to say, hateful, corrupt, decadent—mentality.

It was not that we were heartless precursors of Stalin's regimented society: rather we were idealists at the opposite end of the scale. The withering away of the State was to us one of the most attractive slogans of the early revolutionary period, and we expected money to wither away too: for was it not degrading that this was an essential nexus between human beings? We therefore abolished it as far as we could, and this meant that no one had in his pocket the few roubles necessary to take his girl to a show.

But natural laws always turn out stronger than those invented by men. Our little society was expected to be self-sufficient, but not all our rules could prevent first one then another of us from escaping occasionally into ordinary Moscow life. Thus the molecules of our atom became increasingly unstable. In this I was no exception.

Quite near us was the Central Moscow Medical "Technicum", a girls' training college, which also had its Commune. My Comsomol duties often took me to this college, where I lectured on political matters. Was it a wonder that one among my audience stirred my blood? Agibaylova was a delightful girl of Cossack origin. A Southerner, her temperament was as lively and expansive as my own. Fire flashed from her eyes, laughter lit up her young face, and in the words of Lermontov, I saw in her the wild grace of a mountain chamois. The attraction was mutual. Our love was ethereal and pure.

It was enough for us to hold hands, to gaze into each other's eyes, and to share the same pleasures and discoveries, even if they were the pleasures to be derived from the study of Marx.

But we had reckoned without the idealistic chains with which we had fettered ourselves. It was all very well to want to share the same discoveries, but how were we to do so? We should have liked to meet every evening, but between us stood the barriers of two rigid and uncoordinated systems—her Commune and mine. It was difficult enough to spend an evening with a girl from one's own Commune, it was almost impossible with one from another; it did not need much study of time-tables to see that my love and I would be grey-headed before our free evenings had coincided many times.

Thus, in due course, I, who had been one of the minor prophets of regimentation, addressed myself to the problem of de-regimentation. I applied officially to the President of Agibaylova's Commune for some such disposition of our free evenings as would enable us to meet. I received the expected answer: that my bourgeois prejudices were unworthy of a leading member of the Comsomol. I must, however, have been very insistent, for the President finally agreed to bring up the matter before a meeting of their Management Committee. The result might have been foreseen: my application was rejected, and I was reminded that the interests of the Commune were above the interests of any of its individual members. Hoist with my own petard!

Gradually the Communes fell apart. This was inevitable, and in some ways healthy. But they had served a useful purpose. In a time of acute social change they exercised a civilising, even a softening, influence on the raw material which came to them. I remember a student from the back of beyond—he was later to become a famous Soviet general; the first time he got a free ticket it was for an opera in which Baturin was singing. He would certainly not have gone to the opera on his own—he went because it was virtually impossible to refuse to use a ticket, and he came back saying that there had been a lot of "bawling". But over our canteen table he soon learned to discuss the fine points of good singing!

Apart from this, I think that the most important rôle of the Communes was to provide us with direct, first-hand experience of the Communist classless society in its extreme form—the Students' Commune taught me more than I could have learned from any number of treatises. As Bukharin said years later, the Communes cured those of us who had lived in them of that Leftist ailment—irresponsible play with r-r-revolutionary phrases.

The danger which in time I came to see was that the Communes helped to produce semi-intellectuals. Nothing is more dangerous, I think, than to train the minds of young people while depriving them of personal responsibility. The illiterate peasant or worker housed in a barrack at least remains intellectually humble. But the student brought up in an air-tight institution such as we invented acquires a gross arrogance. Armed with his formulae, he takes appearances for reality and is always ready with a crudely facile answer to the most complex ethical, social and political problems.

As "Minister of Education" in our Commune I argued this matter hotly with the deputy editor of the students' journal, *Krasnoye Studenchestvo* (Red Students). I tried to prove to him that unless the regulations were altered, we would turn out people whose mental make-up was in conflict with the kind of society we strove to establish. The strict egalitarianism, the semi-compulsory visits to places of entertainment, would destroy the element of creative imagination in our human material. Was it not even ridiculous to force all of us to wear the same "cowboy" shirts? Or to issue all of us with identical portions of black bread? What if someone actually needed more, or if illness made it better for another to have different food?

All I got in answer was the stock Moscow phrase: "The Party and the Government know best. Who is cleverer: Stalin or Tokaev?"

In fact, my editor was just the kind of semi-intellectual the machine was turning out.

We continued the discussion, and in the heat of the argument I said more than I had intended. To make our community the finest in the world what we needed was the finest minds, not minds trained in the barrack-room. The Government should give the students more choice. It should assist them, but not force them all to precisely the same discipline. Besides, we were training to be engineers: why did we spend so much of our time on political abstractions? We should devote more of our energies to mathematics, physics, mechanics and the rest of it. What would be the good of us if we came out half-trained in our subjects? *Red Students* ought to start a campaign for a more intelligent approach to the whole problem.

The editor stared at me. Could I possibly be serious? What if the students got it into their heads to go to see bourgeois pornographic films? Or if they started propagating heretical theories?

Before such stupidity I gave up; but later I revived the matter with Kuznetsov, the Secretary of our Ward Comsomol Committee.

Kuznetsov was no fool, but when I was carried away into saying

that it was possible for the Party or the Government to have made a mistake, he too blenched. How could I suggest such a thing? How could I get such an extraordinary idea into my head, when we all knew that we were going from triumph to triumph, with Comrade Stalin at the helm, under the leadership of the Party which had made the Revolution itself? *

This habit, whenever a problem was raised, of getting into a panic and springing to the defence of the Party instead of settling down to a business-like discussion, was one of the most lamentable aspects of Soviet life. Endless energy which should have gone to the solution of practical questions was wasted on feverishly eliminating "dangerous thoughts".

I had a long argument with Kuznetsov. We were of the same age, but he was my superior in the movement and entitled to instruct me. I was quite mistaken, he said: to give students more choice, to encourage their creative initiative would only foster personal ambitions. Our aim was just the opposite: it was to train them in the spirit of Communist collectivism. To cement the community as firmly as possible, individuality must be ironed out.

Moreover, he was bound to point out that my theories savoured of "reactionary idealism". To regard the individual as all-important was idealism, and if I did not pull myself up sharply I would find myself in the camp of those who denied Marxist materialism and defended the primacy of the spirit over matter.

The accusation did not surprise me, for such charges were at that time coming into fashion; one of the reasons for this was that the militant atheism of the early days was losing its drive. Nor did the question interest me: so far from deviating from my chosen path, I felt convinced in acting as I did I was stubbornly pursuing it; and indeed I am today no whit less of an idealist or of a materialist than I was then. What did interest me was the concrete problem of the Communes and I thought that Kuznetsov was merely evading the point at issue by the habitual method, when driven into a corner, of flinging ideological accusations at me.

I went so far as to submit to our Ward Comsomol Committee a memorandum setting out the matters in dispute between Kuznetsov and myself, and asking that they should be thrashed out publicly. Kuznetsov preferred to settle out of court and to my shame I agreed: had I insisted and got the better of him he might not be today one of the bosses at the Kremlin, with his ideas and his methods no doubt unchanged, though perfected technically.

Such an attack on a small boss by his junior would have been

much more difficult later on, but at that time a certain amount of criticism was encouraged as a weapon in the struggle against Right-wing deviation. Not only did I suffer no ill consequences, but I found myself labelled a "theoretician" and "an activist", and Devishev, Secretary of the Comsomol Central Committee, went so far as to say at the Bauman Ward Conference that "some leaders could do worse than learn criticism and self-criticism from the activist Comrade Tokaev".

Yes, at twenty-two I was a Comsomol "activist", and I do not doubt that in the same circumstances I should be one again—it still seems to me that it was better to try to do something than to sit on the fence. Nor were all our ideals wrong. But we had much to contend with, including the inertia left by the past; and we were the second generation—others had set the course of events and we could only try to influence them.

STALIN'S COUNTER-REVOLUTION

THE WORKERS' FACULTY had its own Comsomol branch. Every such branch was held to constitute a "collective". A *collective* is the totality of the members of a group regarded not as a number of individuals brought together by their common purposes, but as a compact unit in which the personality of the individuals is merged in the corporate personality of the *collective*, and this again is a constituent unit of the Empire-wide system. Such a basic corporate unit has its own nerve centre or brain through which orders from above are transmitted: this is the Bureau.

In November, 1930, shortly before my encounter with Kuznetsov, I had been elected to the bureau of the Comsomol Collective to which I belonged. This soon brought me responsibilities—I was put in charge of the "Agitprop" section, the group dealing with "Agitation and Propaganda". "Agitation" means the working up of enthusiasm and activity for a specific end, while "Propaganda" refers to longer term background education. Each Comsomol or Party "collective" has its own allotted field of Agitprop; ours was the Bauman Ward.

The honour of being in charge of Agitprop fell to me for a number of reasons. In my Commune I had been responsible for cultural education. At meetings I had often spoken on theoretical matters. I had written in the press, mainly on political matters, but also on poetry. But I also partly owed the honour to my friends, particularly Fedotov and Belinsky, who liked to see in me a coming philosopher and contrived to make me look like a "political thinker". I was possessed of abundant energy and unlimited enthusiasm and drive, and it was about this time that I also put myself forward as a candidate for the Party.

Here indeed is evidence enough of the genuineness of my convictions, for nobody ever prompted me to do this, let alone brought pressure to bear on me. I was not one of those who, allegedly, joined the Communist Party because I had no other course. I joined it because I wanted to play my full part as a citizen of my country, shaping its future destiny, and I firmly believed that it was through

the Party that my country's future happiness must be achieved.

It is from 1931, when I was a little over twenty-two, that I date the beginning of my conscious political life, for after that time I was never the blind instrument of anybody else's political game. Up till then I had been basically a naïve idealist who was only entering upon life, but for what took place after 1931 I take full responsibility, for I was now mature, knew what I was doing and was—and am—prepared to answer for it. I should like to stress this.

And what exactly did I try to accomplish, and with what concrete results? Let me at once say that, as I see it, the answers to these questions concern the activity of a whole generation, of which I was a typical member. This is where, as I see it, the interest of my own case lies. There is no mystery when a member of the White Guards is labelled "counter-revolutionary" and "anti-Stalinist"; but it is a more complex matter to show how and why such people as myself (born on the eve of the Revolution, having for years lived *for* the Revolution, never having known any régime other than the Soviet, and with nothing in common with the "classical" anti-revolutionary anti-communists) find ourselves political exiles from our country.

It would be easy to bring it all down to a dozen lapidary phrases. But life is not like that, and it is better, for me, to let my life tell its own story. In the revolutionary-democratic struggle which goes on under Soviet conditions there are many factors which do not lend themselves to slick formulation nor fit into one category. Your professional "anti-Soviet man" can always find his solution in the cry "Down with Stalinism"; but for one who is both on the side of the good achieved by the Revolution and on the side of the democratic principles denied by the betrayal of the Revolution—for a "revolutionary democrat"—things are not so simple. Between the realistic and the unreal, the possible and the excluded, that which is paramount and that which is secondary, decisive or unimportant, the line cannot possibly be straight.

More than once, despite our whole-hearted detestation of Stalinism, we had to refrain from forms of anti-Stalinist action which were open to us, and there were other moments when, though conditions were most unfavourable, we had to attack. The reasons which lie behind this are those which our Western comrades need to understand, for what is involved is not merely the activity or the fate of individuals, but the tragedy of a generation.

From the time of my appointment as head of my Comsomol Agitprop section, my whole life underwent a transformation. I ceased to belong to myself or to my closest friends. For the first

time in my life I learnt what responsibility for ideological matters under Soviet conditions really meant. Until now I had always been ready to attack my predecessor and to accuse him of being in the service of a reactionary clique; now I was myself under fire, and I felt horribly defenceless. I was in a small way "a leader", but what a shadow of a leader in reality that was! Every step I took, every word I uttered, was subjected to double, even triple control. I could not issue the smallest directive about the least important detail of our work without preliminary approval by the Secretary of the Collective Bureau, or by the "Party Organiser".

Two or three times a week I had to attend sessions, assemblies, conferences and "plenums" and make speeches in accordance with instructions from above. *Twice weekly* I had to draw up reports, based on reports of the agitators and propagandists under me, regarding the political morale of the staff of the enterprises and institutions in which we worked. Was this not an opportunity for me to inform my superiors concerning what had been worrying me, namely, the dissatisfaction of the ordinary man? How easy things look from outside! But my reports were always cooked, invariably checked by my immediate Party superiors whose censorship cleaned out precisely what I attached most importance to. The reports, which should have been a barometer for the information of the higher authorities, were reduced to a dummy weather-vane made to point to the sort of weather that the bosses wanted.

Another weapon which I seemed to have in my hands was the control of the wall-newspapers in a number of institutions, and my fellow critics in Moscow now brought pressure on me to make some use of this. But even at that early date every article was combed through by a Party leader or by the censorship; not the slightest breath of criticism was permitted—unless indeed it had been officially decided that a particular form of criticism would tend to consolidate the régime; in that case, the criticism *had* to go in whether genuine or not.

In spite of these difficulties, people who were in my position and who shared my views certainly tried; but it would be no exaggeration to say that not one-hundredth part of what we attempted was ever achieved.

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The Central Committee of the Party published a periodical entitled *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* (Proletarian Revolution), devoted to the discussion of problems of politics, history and economics by professional Bolsheviks of good standing. Slutsky was the author of

a *Standard Course of Russian History* (a book of about a thousand pages). In 1931 he offered a paper in which he attempted to show (1) that neither during the First World War nor after it did Lenin and his associates break with the "opportunists" of the Second International or those of the German Social Democrats; (2) that Lenin and his associates did not give decisive support to the Left German Social Democrats; they only supported them when the interests of the Russian Revolution seemed to be at stake and not in the interests of world revolution; (3) that judging from official documents so far discovered there was no proof that Lenin and his associates had waged a decisive and uncompromising struggle against "Centrism"; (this, in the U.S.S.R., signifies the most thinly masked and "dangerous" form of opportunism, one of loyalty to Marxism in words coupled with a passive attitude to both Right-wing and Left-wing tendencies in Marxism).

To discuss Slutsky's thesis in detail would be too long. But it did not need much thought to see that all his charges were mainly levelled not against Lenin but against Stalin and the Stalinists. Slutsky meant that it was not Lenin but Stalin who had decided to break with the moderate elements in the Russian Party or in the World Revolutionary Movement; that Lenin had lent no support to adventurous elements in the World Revolutionary Movement, except perhaps when this was needed in the interests of Revolutionary Russia, but that Stalin's appeal was precisely to such elements. Slutsky suggested that there was no guidance as to what Lenin's attitude towards Centrists had been. He seemed further to make the point that six years since Lenin's death, Stalin had succeeded in abandoning Leninism.

Naturally, Stalin came down on Slutsky, in typical sergeant-major language. "You think of debating these Trotskyist propositions of Slutsky's," he wrote to the magazine (cf. *Proletarskaya Revolutsia*, No. 6, 1931)—"but what is there to be debated? Why did you open your pages to this double-faced slanderer? Is it not a fact that Slutsky is simply slandering Lenin and the Bolsheviks? Is it not clear that Slutsky's scoundrelly manoeuvres are to be branded, rather than made the subject of any debate? Is it not clear that there can be nothing more vulgar or revolting than Slutsky's attempt to cast doubt on certain questions of the history of Bolshevism?"

Perhaps this outburst, which occurred in 1931, should be marked as the first stage in what we call the Stalin reactionary period. Here was the first move in the revision of the whole ideological front of the Soviet Union. The foundation was being laid for a complete

re-evaluation of the history of Bolshevism to suit the spirit and the taste of Stalin and his men and at the same time to cover their mistakes and failures.

How this letter was noted in the West, I have not discovered; perhaps it was scarcely noticed at all. For us, however, its effect was shattering. It immediately gave rise to a deep-seated alarm. Actually it was not till two years later that Stalin's words began to receive their full implementation in public affairs.

To understand our state of mind it must be remembered that the whole student world of the Soviet Union had up to this point learnt its history in Slutsky's handbook. The current historical interpretation of every aspect of social life was rooted precisely in the ideas of this man who was now described by the General Secretary of the Party as a rogue, Trotskyist, rotter, slanderer and scoundrel! If Stalin was right, then how did we stand in so far as we had moulded our thought on Slutsky? If Slutsky was to be smashed, what would be our fate?

From our comrades in Leningrad came an insistent request to call a special conference to discuss our attitude towards the new ideological movement. Such a conference was held, and the introductory survey was given by myself, followed by Belinsky. We described Stalin's act as nothing less than "a resurrection of Tsarist reaction" and we passed a resolution qualifying Stalin as a common forger of history, as guilty of setting up police methods of administration in both the country and the Party and, among other things, as a renegade to Leninism.

Although we dissident students passed this resolution in secret, it would not be right to deduce from this that we already deserved the title of conspirators. We considered ourselves simply as individuals who, though out of agreement with the new Party development, were in no position to express our views freely and therefore were compelled to debate in secret. Our resolution, however, meant that I had new responsibilities. As a "theoretician" and a leader of ideological work, I now had the duty to take steps to popularise our views and spread them in the institutions in which I worked.

This was a duty against which, I admit to my shame, I protested. I felt that it was work beyond my strength, if only because I lacked faith in my own powers and did not consider myself capable of what then seemed "dangerous tasks". My caution had the less excuse, because some of my comrades were already busy with far more dangerous undertakings in their own fields.

I was naturally criticised very severely and in the end agreed to do what was asked of me. But the agonising question remained: how was it to be achieved?

The first step, trifling, but how dear to me, was to distribute leaflets in a number of suitable places in Moscow. This must have been in early January, 1932. It was my first active step as an oppositionist. The leaflets, of course, did not call for the overthrow of the Soviet régime. All they called for was a strengthening of a régime of true Bolshevism to be achieved through the elimination of police methods of rule. We were acting as loyal sons of both the country and the Soviet régime.

Shortly after this there took place an instructional conference of Agitprop leaders in the Moscow Urban Comsomol Committee. The chief contribution was a survey by Lifshits of methods of propaganda work in the light of Stalin's letter in *Proletarskaya Revolutsia*. Lifshits' speech was typical; it went through each point of the famous letter, omitting not one single fragmentary idea, and careful not to depart by a single millimetre from the Stalinist line. Was it clear? the chairman asked, when this was over. Here and there a voice said "Clear enough, clear enough". At this point, I caught the chairman's attention and made my own contribution. Comrade Lifshits, I said, had told us what we have all read more than once, but this was nowhere near sufficient for good Agitprop work. What we needed were proofs, documentary proofs, that between Stalin and Slutsky, one was right, the other wrong. Without such aids, how was I to convince those under me, and they in turn those who listened to them, that the professional historian Slutsky was suddenly all wrong, and Stalin, who was no historian at all, was right? Further, we knew what Stalin had said, but we had no notion of what Slutsky would like to reply. It was the duty of all of us to respect the leader of the Party, but did this free us from the duty to be scientifically thorough in the assessment of disputed questions? Besides, could it really be right to call Slutsky, who had done so much to bring about the theoretical exposure of Trotsky, a Trotskyist? Surely Trotskyism was being made into a mere label devoid of meaning.

I had not made a single direct assertion that Stalin was wrong. Nevertheless, Lifshits' face turned the colour of an over-ripe tomato. "Everybody finds it clear," he shouted, "except Tokaev. Does this mean that under the guise of questions he is himself propagating Trotskyism, siding with that scoundrel Slutsky, casting doubt on Comrade Stalin?"

This was in the classical manner of Stalinist argument. The whole debate now took a dramatic turn. A special commission or "bureau" of theoreticians was set up to conduct an examination. Not merely was my "strange public statement" investigated, but also my whole personality, from the standpoint of ethics and politics. My past and present were turned inside out. Fortunately for me, no trace of Trotskyism or Slutskyism was found in me, and everything quietened down again. It was luckily not one of the years subsequent to 1933, when the labels "Enemy of the People" and "Foreign Spy" had begun to be distributed freely.

Nineteen thirty-one was in fact a year of transition between a revolutionary *dictatorship* and a counter-revolutionary *despotism*. The old Bolshevik guard was still to be liquidated and Stalin's men had, for the present, to be cautious. Even such "Foreign Spies" as Bukharin and Rykov still occupied prominent posts, though they were no longer as influential as they had been. And, after all, the Slutskys could still attempt open criticism in the pages of the Central Party press. We small fry too were still relatively independent. They could pluck at us and tease us, but they could not always get us down; they could restrain us, but they had to tolerate our existence. Perhaps another episode from this period of my life will serve as an illustration.

At a sitting of the Bureau devoted to my case there were some orthodox people who tried to prove that my contribution to the discussion was evidence of ideological errors in the whole Comsomol organisation, for if I was not exactly aiding the Trotskyists, I was certainly aiding the Bukharinists. (This attempt to grade the precise degree of undesirable allegiance is also typical of the period. Later it was all black or all white. Either one was an enemy of the people or one was not.) One member of the Bureau, Kazakov, asked me to state plainly whether I was a sympathiser of the Bukharinists. I said that, though I belonged to no Right-wing grouping, I had great respect for Bukharin himself, both as theoretician and as philosopher, but that was my own business.

I might as well have thrown a bomb, for these were the days of the frenzied fight against the "Right-wing danger", headed by Bukharin. With some honourable exceptions, the members of the Bureau flung themselves upon me. I fought back. What right, I asked them, had they to confuse Bukharin the leader of a political faction with Bukharin the theoretician and philosopher? Had they forgotten that, though dropped from the Politbureau and the Comintern, Bukharin had still been re-elected to the Central Committee? Had

they forgotten that he was Deputy-Commissar of the People for Heavy Industry? Nor, I cried, had our Bureau any right to forget what Lenin had written about Bukharin, and I quoted by heart the minutes of the July, 1926, Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party: "Among the young members of the Central Committee, I wish to mention Bukharin and Pyatakov," wrote Lenin in his testament. "In my opinion here we have the most outstanding forces (among the younger members). . . . Bukharin is not only our most valuable theoretician, he is also, and rightly, the favourite of the whole Party."

The effect of this quotation was remarkable, and that too goes to show the extent to which at that time argument could still prevail over brute force. Such discussions seemed to help us to gain ground since they showed up the Stalinists' lack of a sound theoretical basis. At one assembly, I recall, Belinsky went so far as to assert that if we only had real freedom of discussion and of the press, the isolation of the Stalinist reactionaries from the people was a foregone conclusion. "Three months of freedom of speech," were his words, "and without a single shot we promise you the end of extraordinary measures". But this trifling "precondition" was what we lacked, and this is true in even stronger measure at the present moment. The Kremlin is only too aware what it would mean, and for this reason it is utterly idle to imagine that it will ever of itself make the slightest concession in this direction.

This was the era of the rise of the fanatics. How numerous were those who still thought freely? It is, of course, extremely difficult to give an answer, though one test case does come to my memory which may provide an indication.

It was in theory not essential but in practice advisable for any young people who hoped to achieve a public career to join the Comsomol. Hence this organisation included not only those who were naturally interested in politics, but some who were not, though they shared the ideals of those who were politically minded.

Among these politically inactive students was Levchenko, a fine young fellow from the Ukrainian Kherson; he was the soul of honour and decency, intelligent and a good worker, but neither a "tribune of the people" nor ambitious to become one. In the world of the fanatics, however, noisy lip service to the régime was a *sine qua non* and Levchenko was repeatedly criticised for his muteness. Since he did not jump up at meetings and testify loudly to his adherence to the general line, it was assumed that he did not support it. After much muttering and gathering of clouds a terrible storm

broke over his head, and he was charged point blank with disloyalty. But Levchenko, being Levchenko, remained tongue-tied. Clearly, his loyalty was so genuine that he felt no need to boost it; the attack had merely made him more reticent.

As a member of the Bureau I was on the platform. A note was handed up to me from the body of the hall. It was from Fedotov, who urged me to speak out for Levchenko and hinted at the lines on which I should speak. These were matters long since thrashed out between us. I did as Fedotov, and indeed as my own conscience, urged.

It was, as I recall, one of my longest expositions of the principle of the primacy of man. I claimed that the upbringing of the rising generation should be based not on taking this or that leader as model but on the development of the full human personality. I argued that the community consisted in the last resort of individual men and must be the result of the value of those individuals. From this it followed that we should treat one another as individuals, that there should be common humanity in our approach to one another. We got from others what we gave, and this meant that if you offered even your bitterest enemy the hand of a brother, you could transform him into a comrade; perhaps not in every case, but certainly in many.

What it meant in the precise case before us was that we should not lash out at Levchenko, for such treatment could only excite the same attitude in him. We should remember that every man on earth has a heart, whether harder or softer, and the experience of life teaches us that the human heart responds favourably to kindness. We should make it our first task to see in Levchenko, not a possible enemy, but a comrade, a member of our "Collective". And I went on to draw on Tolstoy—at whose Moscow museum, to the scorn of the fanatics, I was a regular visitor—and to insist that his greatness lay in his hatred of everything that was negative and produced darkness and lack of balance. He was not merely a great writer, he was a great teacher, who had mercilessly exposed the injustices of the old world. This was the real meaning of his non-resistance to evil. Long before him, Rousseau had called on men really to be men, to be full human beings; how could we hope to achieve this ideal, if we treated one another as savages?

When I had concluded, no less than three-quarters of those present laughed at me loudly and scornfully. At this early date my speech was regarded less as a crime than as a piece of cranky folly, but to 75 per cent of the Comsomol it already certainly seemed that.

But the striking thing is not this, but the other fact—that one quarter of my audience had the understanding and indeed the courage *not* to laugh, but to support my point of view. Today the proportion would be less, for the pressure of the fanatics has grown by so much. But it would be wrong to assume that this same lively sense of humanity does not exist at all among many who today feel obliged to give lip service to the fanatics.

A century ago the great writer Vissarion Belinsky said that the most acute problem in Russia was the need for the abolition of serfdom, in which he saw a brake on the healthy development of industry, a force which destroyed the dignity of the individual and one which made for a spirit of collective servility. Again, today, in the Soviet Union, the problem is how to restore to the individual his individual dignity. Anything which contributes to this is essential in the struggle for real progress. The revolutionary democrats in the Soviet Union believe that it is not sufficient merely to engage in the struggle against Stalinism, nor sufficient to perceive the misfortune of one's neighbours. They believe that it is necessary *to have suffered*, for afterwards one cannot live without trying to secure human relations between men. The question as to whether productive relationships should be those of socialism or capitalism is of secondary importance. The first thing is for man to be man, for individual personality to be developed to the full, for the cement binding the units of the community together to be that of humanity.



S. Ordzhonikidze, 1891–1938



Nadezhda Alleluyeva with her
daughter Svetlana

ORDZHONIKIDZE AND ALLELUYEVA

NINETEEN THIRTY-ONE was the period of the famous five-day week, a fantastic failure which certainly outdid in its absurdity the new calendar of the French Revolution. The short-lived French invention was merely a new nomenclature for the years and the months, a flimsy attempt to deny the continuity of history; but the Five-day Week was a denial of the normal rhythm of human life and work. Ever since the early astronomers thousands of years ago had pointed out that the twenty-eight-day lunar period divided into four parts was admirably suited to the human temperament, people had rested every seventh day; now they were to rest every fifth day. The object was not only to decimalise the working week; it was firstly to remove the religious associations of Sunday (the word for Sunday in Russian, *Voskresenie*, means Resurrection), and secondly to keep the whole Soviet Union on its toes, in a never-interrupted frenzy of labour. For my fifth day would not necessarily be *yours*; fifth days were staggered, so as to keep mines, factories and offices continuously working. Officially the scheme was entitled the "Unbroken Five Day Week". Every day one-fifth of the working population had a holiday known as the "Day Out", but the remaining four-fifths worked.

Had the system remained in force, no doubt people would have got used to it, and instead of saying "On Sunday we'll go to so-and-so", would automatically have said "we'll do so-and-so on the fifth day"—always provided that it *was* the fifth day of the whole household or of all the members of a proposed excursion. For there was the rub. Like the Communes, the system ignored the natural desire of individuals to have at least some say in the disposition of their leisure and the choice of their companions. In addition, it showed a ludicrous ignorance of the nature of material objects: even machines require a rest, and so do offices—if only to be cleaned.

What is remarkable is that the inventors of this device really did think it was pregnant with great things; and as usual, when the Kremlin had given an order, experts leapt forward with proofs of its wisdom. Economists declaimed on the saving of fuel that would

result from not having to get the furnaces started again after the normal week-end. Like all fanatics who concentrate on only one detail, they ignored the other aspects of factory management. The jobs normally done during the break got neglected; unfamiliar hands, which took over to ensure "continuity", put tools in unfamiliar places, unmade adjustments, reorganised operations in confusing ways. Maintenance was made impossible, machines broke down, and, in the end, there was a considerable falling-off of production. Then at last Stalin cancelled the five-day week and cynically attacked the unfortunate higher officials whose only rôle had been to implement the Kremlin's whim.

During this time Fedotov and I had our first holiday. Here too the principle of staggering was applied: holidays were not taken in the summer but throughout the year, by rotation. Thus we two found ourselves free at a season we would never have chosen—in the middle of the winter. What were we to do with our holiday? My first idea had been to go to the Caucasus, but there was not much sense in it and the journey was costly; so Fedotov suggested, and I agreed, that we should look for temporary jobs. Fedotov's special line was the study of Trade Unions, so he applied for advice to the Union of Metalworkers, and they fixed us up with clerical work at the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry.

Thus, not so long after our expulsion from Leningrad, we "stormy petrels" of the South found ourselves in one of the biggest institutions of Moscow, and the month we spent there was very useful to us. It is one thing to have to do with officialdom from outside, and quite another to be inside the system. We now obtained that minimum of practical knowledge which enabled us in the future to avoid the cruder mistakes—for, of course, there are things which from outside look pointless but which on closer experience of administration are seen to be in the public interest. (In this connection I am inclined to think that the lack of the very possibility of such experience is one of the cardinal weaknesses of any *émigré* movement; it explains a certain strain, an air of unreality about so much that is planned years afterwards, from outside the country.)

What most excited us at the time, however, was the fact that the Head of the Commissariat was a member of the Politbureau who had been very close to Stalin and whom I myself had met in my boyhood—Sergo (Grigory Constantinovich) Ordzhonikidze.

Ordzhonikidze was then at the height of his powers. He was known as the "Iron O.C. of Heavy Industry" and considered the finest administrator and organiser in the country. We were struck by

the way the thousands of officials in the Commissariat sensed even his coming and going in and out of the building. He pervaded the whole system. Some hated him, but I think the majority were proud to serve under him.

Further, Ordzhonikidze's second-in-command was none other than Bukharin, whom I regarded as a very great thinker. Since Zinovyev's opposition had crumbled away, nobody had offered the Stalin-Molotov-Kirov triumvirate such stubborn resistance as Bukharin. He was the first person in high office to raise his voice against the terroristic measures introduced to collectivise farming and liquidate the *kulaks*, against the ever-increasing encroachment of the State in every sphere of life, against absolutism in fixing market prices, against interference by the Soviet Party in the parties of other countries, against the Russian nationalist mania which had already begun to develop, and against the practice of trying to implant in the non-Russian Soviet regions a "culture" known as "national in form, but socialist in content". In offering this resistance Bukharin had clearly turned against Stalinism, though of course without ceasing thereby to be a communist. Perhaps his attitude in 1932 can be described as similar to that of Western Left-wing social-democrats today; from the Kremlin point of view this meant being Right-wing to a fantastic degree. He was called "protector of the kulaks", "barometer of the malcontents", "apologist of the peaceable co-existence of Capitalism and Socialism", "attorney of the petty bourgeoisie". Through it all he remained—Bukharin.

It was thrilling to Fedotov and myself to be only a few paces away from such communist giants. The two men worked magnificently together, although one was still in the Politbureau while the other had been expelled from it. Ordzhonikidze had voted against Bukharin in the Politbureau, but he supported his application for the post of Deputy Head of the Commissariat. Perhaps the reason for this (although I have not seen it suggested in print) was that his own view of economic policy was already closer to Bukharin's than to the official standpoint. By the close of 1933 there were stubborn rumours of his disagreement with Stalin, and matters came to a head in September, 1934, when he bitterly opposed the transformation of Soviet economy into a single State monopoly with the Commissariat of Heavy Industry as a super-monopoly in itself. It is not without interest in this connection that when Bukharin was transferred to another department—I think it was in 1934—he was replaced by the second theoretician of the Party, Pyatakov, who in 1937, in the second Moscow Trial, was condemned to death by shooting. At

the time of that trial all Ordzhonikidze's deputies, past and present, were arrested, and in February, 1937, Ordzhonikidze himself broke down under the strain and died of heart failure. Though I have no evidence for this, I feel sure that had not nature intervened in this way, he would himself have been arrested and tried with Bukharin as an "enemy of the people". There were persistent rumours that Bukharin, Ordzhonikidze and Pyatakov had been preparing a new revolution. I shall return to this subject later.

Of such matters we had, of course, no clear notion during the time we spent in the Commissariat, though we knew that our O.C. had a mind of his own, and heard that on occasion he went so far as to thump the table at sittings of the Politbureau.

The Commissariat was certainly the best run centralised institution in Moscow. The relations between members of the staff were excellent and there was a general atmosphere of expeditiousness. Red tape was cut down to the minimum. Above all, Ordzhonikidze's methods were strikingly frank. While I was there, an official in the planning section tried to denounce an engineer named Mukhin for having been allegedly a Trotskyist eleven years earlier. When Ordzhonikidze heard of this his first action was to summon the informer and ask him if he had told Comrade Mukhin what he was doing. When the informer said that he had not, and that he would prefer Mukhin not to know, Ordzhonikidze there and then sacked the man, while he advised Mukhin himself to tell the story—if it was true—of how he had voted for one of Trotsky's resolutions at the next Party Conference.

Such methods made for a good spirit throughout the Commissariat. The Head of our own section was a senior engineer, Vassilkovsky. He had been a civil servant since before the Revolution and was now an important personage who had certainly no need to go out of his way to secure the allegiance of such minor and temporary figures as Fedotov and myself. Yet he kept a fatherly eye on us. One day he asked us if we were satisfied with our work. We said we were, but we did not know if the work was satisfied with us. "Work is never satisfied with those who do it," he said. "But that needn't trouble you two. Go steady, or your studies will fall behind. It won't do much harm to the country if you fill in a few less forms, but it will be a loss if the country fails to get two more good engineers."

On his orders, we were told to take our meals in the engineers' canteen; when we asked why—we thought there might be some mistake—he said: "Because you are proletarian students—I am

sure you don't have too much to eat, so we're going to feed you up a bit. Consider yourselves our guests, if you like. I haven't forgotten what it was like when I was a student myself." And when we left our temporary job, we were issued, on Vassilkovsky's instructions, with coupons to buy clothes in the closed stores of the Commissariat, so that we were able to fit ourselves out with good new trousers and boots. We were also given excellent testimonials to hand on to the Workers' Faculty Administration.

One day, while I was working at the Commissariat, Ordzhonikidze heard that I was there and had me called to his office, much to the amazement of the girl secretary who came for me. I must have changed greatly since I lay as a boy in the Dzhaudzikau Hospital where my brother Andrey had brought him to see me, for at first he could scarcely recognise me. "Can it be you, Gogki?" he cried, "how you have grown up! Now tell me how you managed to get yourself into my Commissariat, of all places? And why did you not let me know?"

I explained that it had not been my choice but that of the Trade Union. After answering a number of personal questions, I related all that had happened to me, including the circumstances of my removal from Leningrad. At moments he smiled, at others he frowned. On hearing of my "voluntary" transfer he cried: "Scoundrels! Rogues! Villains! How dare they!" I was amazed. I had imagined by now that all our leaders were cold and calculating, and it was moving to see a man with a genuine Caucasian temperament. How well it fitted those fiery eyes, those long black moustaches *à la* Boudyonny. "So we fought to destroy arbitrary police rule," he cried, "and this is what happens under Kirov's very nose."

His indignation delighted me; at the same time I felt bewildered. How could he be so indignant about what was happening "under Kirov's nose", and not be more worried about what was happening every day in Moscow, under his own? And was he ignorant of the news reaching us about the savageries committed against the farmers in his Caucasian homeland? Were there not people being liquidated and dying of starvation in the North Caucasus, which he had once promised to free from the arbitrary rule of Tsarist governors, and did free with his Eleventh Army? Besides, was not his own deputy, Bukharin, a victim of the same kind of political repression as that which had driven me from Leningrad? Was not he himself a member of the Politbureau which had expelled Bukharin and removed him from his other leading positions?

There was much I should have liked to say, but I have to admit

that I was overawed. Moreover, I had the sense of being a visitor in Ordzhonikidze's house, and my Caucasian concept of manners made it difficult for me to say anything likely to embarrass my host—what I wanted to say was that the pot should not call the kettle black.

All the same, I could see that he was genuinely perturbed by some of the information I gave him. There is little doubt that at this time he, like many another old Bolshevik, was beset with misgivings concerning the state of affairs.

Ordzhonikidze asked me about the student commune, and himself stigmatised it as too Leftist. Did I think that it had been a useful institution? I replied that the Commune had proved some of our abstract notions to be mythical, and this had been useful. I also told him that in our Workers' Faculty, which was under his Commissariat, there were sons of workers' families who were without bursaries, while these were being given to children of Party and State officials who were relatively well off. "Surely there is no social justice in this. Does the Government know what is happening?" I asked.

Ordzhonikidze questioned me further, then he sent for the Head of the Workers' Faculty Administration. Shortly after this, the Faculty was visited by a State Commission to enquire into the material conditions of the students and the distribution of bursaries. The only person whom I told of my part in this affair was Fedotov; it was a great satisfaction to us both to see the enquiry produce considerable improvement. While there were such men as Ordzhonikidze in key positions minor changes for the better were still possible, though the general system was not, of course, affected.

* * * * *

Life in the Soviet capital is full of surprises. There are meteoric rises and equally sudden and dramatic falls. Every now and then, a familiar light is suddenly extinguished, like a candle snuffed out in a dark corridor at the opening of a distant, unseen door.

In the early spring of 1931, I was invited by some fellow students to an evening party at the Stalin Commercial Academy. They insisted on my wearing a Caucasian costume—that costume which is really that of the Circassians and has come to be known also as "Cossack". There was no political purpose in this, the idea was merely to bring in a touch of colour and romance. Of course, I possessed no such luxury, but I managed to borrow from one acquaintance a *besmet* (close-fitting tunic), from another soft

leather knee-boots, from a third a belt with silver buckles, from a fourth a magnificent tall caracul fur cap.

Dressed in this fine style, I made my way to the party. The official overture with which every party in the U.S.S.R. begins—some sort of political lecture—was already over, and a concert had begun, though I should explain that a concert in Moscow is not necessarily what is called a concert in the West; it consists of an *ad hoc* succession of entertainments rather than of a set programme. But before the concert in the main hall was finished, my friends took me to the Party Bureau room, and there I found a small company of men and women, reclining in comfortable armchairs and chatting peacefully. I did not know a single person, but I was first introduced to a woman of about thirty, of medium height, with a rather large, yet shapely, nose, and short-cut hair brushed back from the forehead. She was neatly but very simply dressed in an afternoon frock. In Moscow, it is the custom for a person being introduced to another to pronounce his or her own surname, and to my astonishment the lady to whom I was introduced, holding out her hand but not rising from her seat, said: "Alleluyeva." (I should explain that it is quite customary for a married woman to retain her maiden name, and to use it in social life.) With a rush of confusion—blushing indeed—I replied: "Tokaev." For this was none other than Stalin's second wife.

Nadezhda Sergeyevna Alleluyev (Alleluyeva is the feminine form of the surname) was the youngest of the four children of Sergey Yakovlevich Alleluyev, a worker revolutionary who had been one of the founders of the Bolshevik party (he died in 1946). Stalin had known the family since before the 1914 war, and on one occasion Nadezhda related her memory of him in 1913, when he returned from a period of exile, and told her stories about the bears in the Vologda country. She was then about twelve years old. After the Revolution, Stalin found her a post in the People's Commissariat of National Minorities. His first wife, E. K. Svanidze, had died in 1907, and soon after Alleluyeva came to work in Moscow, Stalin married her. The marriage, of course, was a simple registry office affair, but it brought Nadezhda to live "at court", i.e., in the Kremlin, where she bore Stalin a son and a daughter. After this she took up University studies, and at the time I met her was a student of the Chemistry Faculty of the Stalin Commercial Academy and a member of its Party bureau; this explains her presence at this party given by her fellow students. It was one of her remarkable features that she joined in all student activities with exemplary simplicity.

How well I remember that party! As the evening drew on the atmosphere became more convivial, stories were exchanged, songs were sung, and our teachers were imitated; and then, to my dismay, it occurred to some bright wit—or was this the real reason for the proposal that I should come in Caucasian dress? to suggest that I should dance the *lezghinka*, one of our Caucasian flings. In vain I tried to get out of it. I was literally carried into the big hall, a circle formed round me, humming, singing Caucasian tunes and clapping out the beat, and I had to dance. Once started, I let myself go, and have never since ceased wondering how I found so much energy. The *lezghinka* is a dance in which you improvise using certain steps, leaping, squatting, leg-flinging, with wild movements of the arms and cries of delight, and I turned myself into a whirlwind.

When at last it was over and we were back in the smaller room, Alleluyeva, smiling her approval, asked me why with such ability I did not take up dancing as a career. "Do you think me such a poor brain?" I asked her. She must have known that I was joking, but she shook her finger at me and admonished me not to speak in such a way about dancers. "There are many gifted men among them, and you might be one of them."

"Or perhaps one of the mediocrities."

"You're just acting a part, Comrade Tokaev."

"All Caucasians do," I replied. "I wouldn't like to be an exception."

"All *Caucasians are heart-eaters*," cried a young woman who sat next to Alleluyeva; she was the wife of one of the generals who were shot in 1937.

I turned to Alleluyeva. "Please protect us poor Caucasians," I said. "After all, we are your relations."

"Well, haven't I put my trust in you?" said Alleluyeva enigmatically, with a slight smile. "I know you Caucasians, always ready for a scrap."

Nadezhda Alleluyeva was an outstanding personality. Among the Kremlin womenfolk there are many who put on airs, but she was always simple; her every gesture was unassuming, there was never anything strained or forced about her; she was the soul of frankness and honesty, despite all the stories that were circulated after her mysterious death. For Nadezhda Alleluyeva was not destined to be long in this world, and Moscow specialises in *zuboskaly* (teeth-barers)—evil-minded lick-spittles, always ready to decry their betters once they are defenceless.

Alleluyeva was exceptionally broadminded and intensely human.

She was, in fact, the opposite of her husband. But what his wife felt and thought did not matter to Stalin, and it probably did not occur to him when he proposed to her that in later years she would be anything more than a submissive, primitive wife, obedient to his every whim and never questioning any of his acts.

In fact the opposite proved to be the case, for Nadezhda Alleluyeva was a woman of great courage and of a never-clouded honesty of mind. When, in 1929, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskey started to form their grouping, to be known as "Buryto" and condemned as "Right-wing deviation", she openly showed her sympathy for it. For Bukharin she had immense respect, considering him by far the cleverest man in the Kremlin, and there is no doubt that Stalin was aware of his wife's opinion. Not that this was of any help to *Buryto*. How hard it must have been for her to be the wife of Stalin and the mother of his children in those final two or three years in which the gulf between them widened.

Once, in the presence of one of Stalin's advisers, I brought to her notice the fact that Stalin's measures against Bukharin and his group—branded as "opportunists"—were making many people indignant. "Why beat about the bush?" she cried. "Say plainly that it is all Stalin's stupidity. You needn't fear, I shall not denounce you." And when I agreed with her, readily enough, she smiled sadly and shook her head. "I understand it all," she said. "With me there is no need for evasion."

Her opinion of Stalin as a man, after years of intimacy with him, was not high. It was shortly before her sudden death, at a meeting in Nikolsky Street, near the Kremlin, that I told her I was thinking of writing a small book about Stalin, and required for it certain details of his biography; she looked at me in frank amazement and said: "A small book about Stalin? Have you really nothing more interesting to write about?" When reminded of her position, she would cry indignantly: "I am Nadezhda Alleluyeva, not your Secretary-General."

All these words echoed in my mind on 11th November, 1932, when, together with Fedotov, I followed her coffin from outside the Kremlin to her last resting place in a simple grave in the Novodevichy Cemetery. Four days previously, I had seen her at a private party, her usual sparkling self, full of life and vigour, though perhaps a deepening sorrow could be detected in her eyes. After all, what could she do? She could protest, and protest she did. Early in 1930 she had had a violent clash with Stalin, when he sent Red Army units against the workers of the Northern Caucasus; and since she had

the courage of her convictions and an unfaltering faith in humanity, it is difficult to see how there could ever be any real understanding between them after that.

How Nadezhda Alleluyeva died I do not know, and without sufficient knowledge of the facts, I make no accusations. But that her sudden death in the night of 8th November, 1932, was unconnected with political causes I cannot believe. The world was the poorer for her passing, and I mourned her with a heavy heart.

Nor did I then suspect that the fourteen-year-old son, Vassily, whom she left, would one day be one of my most bitter enemies. This has been a curious trick of fortune, particularly since, because of my feeling for his mother, I have invariably treated that unpleasing character with a respect he has never deserved. He has repaid me for it by thirsting after my blood, and was in the end one of those who caused me, in sheer self-preservation, to take refuge in the Western world.

FIRST CLASH WITH THE PARTY

THE AUTUMN of 1931 brought me painful enlightenment. I found myself back from Moscow in the North Caucasus. And there by the North Ossetian Party Provincial Committee I was sent as a member of a "Brigade" of enquiry into the latest disorders in the recently established collective farms. This duty, in two senses a burden, was a logical consequence of my origin and of my successful progress as a student and a political activist. I was now to see at first hand the depths to which collectivisation had reduced my homeland and to earn the scorn of my own countrymen, for I came to them not as "our tractorist" but like a sort of Tsarist governor. I was met with not a single word of welcome, not a single smile. Karatsev, Secretary of the local Party branch, an old friend of mine, a worthy, gentle fellow if ever there was one, as well as an enthusiast burning with faith in an ultimately happy issue, received me as if we were strangers. It took several days to thaw him out; then he did not beat about the bush. "Go back to Moscow," he said, "before it is too late, before some sniper shoots you down. We feel you are no longer one of us."

However, I did not go. I loved my fellow countrymen all the more for their sufferings and for their rebellious spirit, little use though it was for them to oppose Stalin's forced collectivisation. In any case, why should I be the mark for their bullets? Was it my fault that I had been appointed to this commission? Was not every Comsomol or Party member a unit in a vast army, subject to commands like any soldier?

Though it took some time to persuade him, I got Karatsev to summon a Party conference *in camera*, at which I spoke for something over two hours on the international and internal situation of the Soviet Union. I was heard out with considerable attention. Then came questions, and I did my best to answer, not forgetting the trouble which awaited me in Moscow for the slightest lack of caution. Was it true, they asked, that Bukharin supported the peasantry? Was it true that Bukharin disagreed with Stalin's agricultural policy? I indicated, of course, that the Party had definitely rejected the Right-Deviation views of Bukharin, but what I then

saw was far more instructive than any amount of book study: the great body of the peasantry, by elemental instinct, were on the side of Bukharin. I doubt if a really free vote would have produced a single supporter of Stalin's general line. This was not so much because they were sure that Bukharin was the friend of the peasantry as that it was so clear that Stalin was their enemy. As they saw it, Stalin was the supreme commander in a savage war to exterminate the kulaks and to drive the peasants into the collective farms. Stalin was known as the supreme destroyer of anything which breathed of private life. In my reply I had deliberately evaded the real point of their questions, and this caused much indignation among them. Karatsev again quietly advised me to leave before anybody laid hands on me. Then came another question, straight from the shoulder, "Gogki, and who may you yourself be for?" Others took up the cry. Karatsev yet again told me I had far better leave. But I could not. The question cut to the bone. Indeed, for whom did I stand? What could I tell these men among whom I had grown up and with whom I had worked? Should I tell them the truth? Or should I deceive them?

The dilemma was very real to me, and that evening is one of the landmarks of my personal life. I wriggled out of the answer I should have given them. I played the hypocrite. I was afraid to give a straight answer. I was afraid of a long sentence of forced labour, of exile to Siberia. At the same time I was afraid to lie, afraid of my own conscience. So I wriggled, and earned the hostility of my former comrades.

However, I could not bring myself to return to Moscow without an attempt to restore something of my former relations with these men. I asked Karatsev to summon a joint meeting of the local Party and Comsomol branches, and announced that I would try to answer whatever questions they put to me. I explained that when I returned to Moscow, I intended to write an exhaustive report on the sufferings of the peasantry, and I asked all those present to be as frank as they wished in their questions and statements. Now the men who had accused me—and rightly—of hypocrisy, told their story.

What a pity the dictators themselves never attend such meetings! No theory, no books could give them so vivid an impression of the reality hidden behind the well-filtered reports they are accustomed to receive. To say that there was general dissatisfaction would be a ridiculous understatement. The outrage and the bitter anger in every voice had to be heard to be believed. Now I examined eagerly case after case. It was not sufficient merely to hear stories of the collecti-

visitation of the horses of a district, and their sufferings in cramped quarters, without properly organised care. It was not sufficient to hear the stories of fathers whose children's bellies were swollen with hunger. I also insisted on hearing the stories of mothers who were now obliged to leave their crying children and go out into the fields for long hours of hard farm work. I examined the clothing of men who had made trousers for themselves of old sacks, and had not a shred of underlinen. That evening I went into it all, detail after detail.

A spark of human frankness had fired the whole powder magazine, and in its light was revealed the whole gruesome truth, facts which hitherto, from shame, had been concealed from the "Moscow man". It all boiled down to one thing: the mass of the people, certainly in the North Caucasus, had developed an intense hatred of Stalin's ruthless policy. This indeed we in Moscow knew in general terms—that was why I was here—but we did not feel it directly, in a human fashion. Now I saw it all before my eyes, and no Stalins or Molotovs or Kirovs could have convinced me of anything else. Here I graduated in life's university, for at last I had come upon something which challenged me, and regarding which there was but one course open to me: to expose what had taken place. I could not remain indifferent.

But here arose the old tragic questions: How? By what means? Whom to approach? A way had to be found. These were my people. They saw in me "a Moscow man", and they naturally thought I had the means of bringing the facts to the notice of the authorities. They had confidence that I would do as I said—greater confidence indeed than I myself had, since I did not yet know how I was to set about it.

With the data I had assembled I withdrew to Dhaudzhikau, and there sought the assistance of one of the leading officers of the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic. Together we prepared a detailed report to the Central Government. He was like a drowning man clutching at a straw. It was not that he did not realise what an unimportant person I was, or how insignificant in comparison with himself. He knew this perfectly well, but there was an essential difference between us which to him seemed to reverse our relative magnitudes—I was a "man from Moscow", however lowly in my own sphere, he was only a senior person in a distant subordinate republic.

His position was grand merely on paper. In fact he had one task only—to fulfil the orders sent to him from Moscow. Indeed, the Secretaries of the provincial, municipal and regional Party Com-

mittees in the U.S.S.R. had already become merely the secretaries of the representatives of the police-chiefs of the Kremlin. They had duties, but no rights, and in their terms of reference there was no mention at all of concern for the condition of the workers. In 1952 Stalin, Malenkov and Molotov stated that the main task of the collective farms was to supply the country with food and raw materials, not to busy themselves with such matters of local interest as well-built agro-towns, corporations or craft workshops. Thus, *mutatis mutandi*, it stood also in the official policy in 1932.

Compared with him, I was indeed in a better position to take action. In the first place, I was returning to Moscow and could at least try to get a direct appeal through to the Central Committee of the Party by unofficial means. (No official channel would ever transmit it, the filters were too many and too fine.) Secondly, I was not weighed down with local responsibility. Thirdly, as my friend was aware, I had the ear of one of the big shots.

In due course I carried my twelve-page document to the Central Committee. In Moscow I was joined by two other North Caucasians, and at last, after much waiting in lobbies, we were received by the Secretary of the Committee, Pavel Petrovich Postyshev. Postyshev was certainly no fool, but he was a rough diamond, careless of others' feelings. He got himself up as a Don Cossack, with the typical top-knot, moustaches, side-buttoning tunic shirt, chrome-leather boots, para-military leather belt, and voluminous breeches. He was tall and thin as a lath, with a grating bass voice. It fell to me to outline the contents of our report, but Postyshev addressed all his questions and remarks to a high-ranking Party officer who had come with me. If he did glance at me, it was with obvious scorn, as if to emphasise that I had no business at all with policy in the North Caucasus.

Then it became clear that he was interested, not in the contents of the report, but in how it came to be written. The Party, he said, could take no account at all of the private complaints of private citizens. The Party had its policy and there were men appointed to implement that policy. Hence it was completely idle to meddle. Here I tried to argue that when the common people, by and large, were suffering, it was one's business, but Postyshev cut me short. "If," he said, "you do not cease irresponsible action of this sort, you will have to face a Party court." After this complete failure, on the insistence of my comrades I went to Leningrad, where I saw a senior Party official who was particularly interested in North Caucasian matters. I handed him a copy of the report and also told him myself

all I had seen. It was on his intervention that a little later it was decided to inform Bukharin in Moscow, particularly regarding the attitude of the peasantry. The meeting with Bukharin needed considerable engineering, but that was not my concern. My task was to tell him my story. This is how Belinsky and I first came to cross Bukharin's threshold; it was on this occasion that he called me a "rebellious Caucasian".

Unfortunately, caution prevents me from giving the gist of that interview. Too many things were mentioned of which a record would put weapons in the hands of the secret police, for though Bukharin has now been dead for fifteen years, others, who could be traced by the all-recording Kremlin police, are not. Some general details of that meeting I gave in the first pages of this autobiography; all I can add now are trifles, though even these may not be without interest for the light they throw on Bukharin. How old was I, he asked. "Unfortunately, only twenty-three," I replied. "The best years in a man's life," he protested, "don't be in any hurry to be old, that is sure to come to you." Belinsky, laughing, told him what a "thinker" I was, and assured him that I was reading *War and Peace* for the twenty-third time, "and he still cannot see its central theme."

They both laughed at my expense, then Bukharin nodded understandingly and observed that Tolstoy had re-written *War and Peace* eleven times, yet never to his satisfaction. That was the way to work, ever seeking the main thing in what one was doing; if the core was mastered, the rest followed easily. "Go on seeking Tolstoy's principal idea, Comrade Tokaev," said Bukharin, "and I am sure you will find it. My advice to you is to pay particular attention to the final chapters; they are packed with interesting thoughts."

Bukharin was for working up a "spirit of opposition" by intensifying *ideological work*, by agitation and propaganda, by *persuasion* and *theoretical* discussion. By these methods an appeal should be made to the youth among the workers and the peasants; we should pit our individual personalities against Stalin's robot functionaries and bureaucrats. "The task," he said again, "is to get the masses to realise the dangerous political and economic consequences of Stalin, Molotov and Kirov's general line, but this can only be done by persuasion. How much time will be needed to awaken the consciousness of the mass of the people? In how many years will the peoples of the U.S.S.R. be able to grasp how impossible the present road is? Nobody knows, neither I nor Stalin, neither Molotov nor Kirov. Perhaps five years, but perhaps as many as ten. You must never lose sight of the fact that in the history of Russia so

far there has never been a single truly democratic day, and this means that it is no use building on illusions and wishful thinking. Yet no revolution is worth an egg until the millions play their part in it and are aware of its aims."

This was all typical Bukharin, this notion of working up a general spirit of resistance, without ever a trace of direct organised struggle against the policy of extreme measures. He was ready to *talk* about a new revolution, yet refused to admit that it was feasible until the masses had acquired a sense of what it all meant. As for us, the younger generation, he urged us to have confidence in ourselves, but he also urged us to have patience. Events were to prove him right in this and, in the long run, we realised that in the early thirties we approached our political problems in a very shallow way. Two years later, in 1934, we attacked Bukharin and his fellows savagely, accusing them of slithering back into the bogs of Stalinism, but eventually we were to understand that they knew far better than we did what was possible and what was not. The fact that at our first meeting he told us nothing could be done to stop forced collectivisation did not mean that he did not condemn it; it merely meant that he was less powerful than we had foolishly thought he was.

By 1936, we at last came to understand that between the *need* to struggle and the *possibility* of doing so with any effect there was a deep gulf. Many outside the Soviet Union still fail to grasp the cardinal fact that in the U.S.S.R. no opposition group can work which has not acquired this painful realisation.

Early in 1931 I had become a candidate for Party membership. For an applicant graduating from the Comsomol, and of working class origin, the normal period of candidature at that time was six months, and I should have become a full Party member in June or July, 1931. However, it was not till the end of January, 1932, that I was admitted. The reason for this delay developed out of my trip to the North Caucasus—it was not my report on North Caucasian conditions, but a denunciation which followed me to Moscow. When my application came up before the Party Bureau it seems that in the dossier was found a letter from the North Caucasus asserting that "whenever" I went there I gathered together Comsomol and Party members and carried on Right-wing deviationist propaganda. Further, I had actually gone to the houses of "dekulakised" peasants in the district, and had on a number of occasions spoken against the Party and the Government and failed to oppose anti-Soviet tendencies.

So serious an accusation had to be thoroughly investigated, and



Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920: Lenin in the centre, Kamenev on his left and Zinovyev on his right; Stalin in the background, with Bukharin on his right and Sokolnikov on his left

this task was handed to a Party member named Aleksandryuk. It might seem that the simpler course would have been merely to reject my application for membership, but to think this is to misunderstand the nature of Soviet life. My application, once accepted, removed the matter from the sphere of my private interests, and made it a public matter. I was already a member of the Comsomol, a unit in the system. The Party Bureau had no other course but to investigate the charge. Aleksandryuk had to travel with me down to the North Caucasus to pursue the enquiry. Leave could not be granted me to visit my own brother when he lay dying, even though in that case I had proposed to pay my own travelling expenses, but public money and two men's time could be spent—*had to be spent*—on clearing up an anonymous denunciation.

Karatsev, to whom we first went, expressed his ignorance of any such charges. If any member of his branch had denounced me, it was without his knowledge. Therefore Aleksandryuk asked for a general meeting to be called, at which as many people as possible could give their testimony regarding me. The result was remarkable. They took the slur on my name as a slur on their own, and with pride and gratitude I can record that not one word was said against me; indeed, they praised me to an embarrassing extent. It was their way of expressing their recognition of the years when we had laboured together.

In the end, one of the authors of the denunciation was discovered. He was a Party fanatic who had never understood what I was after, but even he now withdrew his charge and apologised, and the whole matter was settled by a general resolution in my favour. In addition, the assembly passed a resolution asking the Moscow Workers' Faculty Party Bureau to accept me as a member, and a number of senior Party members there and then wrote personal recommendations.

We then went to Dzhaudzhikau, and there called on my old friend, Sarmat Kosyrati, who had taught me the rudiments of journalism. He was now the Chief Editor of the *Rastdzhinad* (Truth) to which, years before, I had contributed. This was the Ossetian Party newspaper, and Kosyrati told Aleksandryuk that the editorial board would oppose anybody who tried to slander me, to which Kudzag Dzesov, a senior member of the staff, added "If Moscow doesn't want Tokaev, let us have him back, we are even ready to pay for him"—a wisecrack which made its mark.

When I returned to Moscow I felt the ground firm under my feet. This became noticeable to others, and one day the Secretary of the

Party Branch asked me what particular service I had done my fellow-countrymen, to earn such warm support. It had not occurred to him that my only service had been to show that in spite of my translation to Moscow I had remained a son of my own nation.

In the first days of February, 1932, I received my Party full member card.

EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Soviet Union is a closely-regimented body, subject to the strictest discipline. This, I think, everybody knows. But few who have not experienced it can realise what this means in practice. The Party has a rigidly graduated system of sanctions, in eight stages. These are:

1. *Na vid*, or calling attention to a fault, which involves critical discussion of what a Party member has done, at a general assembly of his basic branch;
2. *na vid s zaneseniem v lichnoye d'elo*—the same as the foregoing, but with a record made in the dossier, which accompanies the Party member through life;
3. *vygovor*, or reprimand;
4. *vygovor s zaneseniem v lichnoye d'elo*—the same as the foregoing with a record in the dossier;
5. *strogy vygovor*, or stern reprimand;
6. *strogy vygovor s zaneseniem v lichnoye d'elo*—or stern reprimand with a record in the dossier;
7. *strogy vygovor s preduprezhdeniem i zaneseniem v lichnoye d'elo*—or the same as the foregoing, plus a warning that expulsion may follow if the Party member does not behave better, this being the highest sanction, apart from
8. *iskluchenie*—or expulsion.

I had scarcely been admitted to the Party when I was subjected to sanction 7—stern reprimand with warning and record in my dossier—for a matter which may throw some light on the way the official Party mind functions.

Perhaps I should go back in the story to 1928, when Stalin emerged from the Kremlin to go to Siberia to break the resistance of the peasantry to collectivisation and ensure that grain was delivered in accordance with the State requirements. Addressing a plenary session of the Siberian Regional Party Committee, he said: "You say that the harvest plan cannot be realised. You say the kulaks do not wish to deliver grain at low prices. But surely you are not

ignorant that there is a law against speculation? Surely you are not ignorant that Section 107 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR makes persons guilty of speculation liable to criminal proceedings, while their goods (the grain) may be confiscated by the State? Why do you not apply that law against grain speculators? I propose that: (a) you require the kulaks immediately to deliver all residues of grain at State prices, (b) in case of refusal you take proceedings against them under Section 107 and confiscate their grain residues for the State."

On 6th January, 1928, the Central Committee of the Party issued an order remarkable in its severity. It concluded with a threat to Party executives: it was up to them to use whatever means were necessary to secure the deliveries and if they failed within a given time, they were themselves to be criminally responsible. These measures were applicable throughout the country, and anybody refusing to deliver grain thereby became a kulak. Grain residues meant any grain possessed by the farmer. Under these measures 24,000,000 peasant households groaned.

This is one side of the picture. On the other was a great speed-up of strategic industrialisation, hasty curtailment of the New Economic Policy, clumsy general management of the State, terrorisation, forced collectivisation of the peasantry, and a general ideological recession towards dogmatism. The net result was increasing famine. Even in the fruitful Caucasus people had begun to feed on wild roots, and cats and dogs had disappeared into the pot. Provincial towns scarcely obtained a twentieth part of what they needed. Even Moscow, which had normally the best food supply of any town in the country, was put on semi-starvation rations, consisting mainly of poor quality black rye bread (sometimes with a curious tarry odour from added substitutes), supplemented with inferior potatoes and salted cabbage. The shortage reached its height in 1931 and 1932, and it was in the winter of 1931-32 that I committed my "crime".

Hungry people are good learners. The most abstruse procedures for getting at food were mastered in no time, and *blat*—a mixture of English *fiddling* and what the French call *se débrouiller*—took firm root in Soviet life and has luxuriated there ever since. It was in Moscow that it reached its height, for it was there that food tended to accumulate, and in 1932 the Moscow Party Committee decided on energetic measures to suppress it. People guilty of *blat* were to be caught, the centres where ration cards were forged were to be discovered, and a severe check was to be maintained on bakers and bread purveyors. (Bread, it should be remembered, forms a very

large part of the diet of every Soviet citizen; it is not a mere adjunct to main meals, as in Great Britain, or the United States.)

Of course, my Ward Party Committee (the Baumann Ward) played its part in the campaign, and together with two students of the Kuibyshev Higher Constructional Engineering Institute I found myself checking rations at a small bread stall in Aptekarsky Street. It was very cold that winter, and the first morning we went there it was dark and misty. The chill penetrated our thin, mainly cotton, clothing and pierced to the very marrow of our bones. Our instructions were to take up certain positions of vantage before the stall opened, and to see that no bread was taken away in the hours of darkness and later to check the coupons. Extremely humiliating work, but orders were orders.

When the stall-keeper appeared we made our way into his plywood hut, showed him our papers and explained our purpose. He did not utter a word; there was only an expression of mingled injury and scorn on his face. He had kept this bread-shop for many years and had never before been suspected of wrongdoing. We spent the whole day there, as instructed, but saw no black-market transactions. From time to time the stall-keeper expressed his pity for us, for our instructions forbade us to eat while we were in his store. We had not even been allowed to bring food with us, and the only source of warmth was a single Primus stove.

The loaves were customarily very large, and when they were carved up for customers, there were inevitably some small pieces left over. Towards evening, the stall-keeper suggested we might at least eat some of these scraps. As chairman of the "control commission" I refused. In the end, however, I let one of my assistants go home—he had a bad chill—and allowed the other to take advantage of the stall-keeper's offer. He ate about four ounces of fragments, which otherwise would have been thrown away; I myself did not touch a morsel. Just as we were getting ready to go, a poor old beggar woman, dirty and in rags, a walking skeleton, came up to the stall, as was apparently her practice, and held out a bag for scraps.

"What am I to do, Comrade Chairman?" the stall-keeper asked.

"Give her whatever you have outside the coupon value—as much as you can," I said.

"Supposing she tells someone?"

"No matter," I said. "Here is my own bread-card if you like, give her today's allowance."

This he would not do. I was a student, he said, and needed all I could get, he would manage. To cover himself, he gave her some of

his own bread-tickets, as well as adding some scraps. For the first time that day we found we shared the same feelings. "Now it's your turn," he insisted. The other student agreed, and between them they forced me to swallow about three ounces of bread scraps, thereby technically infringing the Moscow Party Committee instructions.

All day we had not seen a single supervisor, but just as my mouth was full, a few minutes before the end of the day, the door opened and there was the head of the Regional Supervisory Commission himself—the supervisor of the supervisors. He was a stout student of the Workers' Faculty, Ionov by name, a member of the Party Bureau and head of the "Conflict" section, which dealt with Party disciplinary charges, a fellow who wore moustaches but never combed his hair, and was distinguished by doctrinal rigidity and a spiteful nature.

"As you are, don't move an inch, where did you get that bread?" he cried. What an idiotic question! But then, the whole thing was idiotic. One's natural reaction would have been to punch his nose, but inside the machine one does not easily do natural things. "Aha!" he cried meaningfully, and his muddy eyes flashed, "eating State bread, are we? Breaking instructions of the Moscow Party Committee, are we? Tokaev, you shall stand trial for this."

The poor stall-keeper hastily explained the circumstances, adding that the scraps I was eating were outside the count.

What courage small people like that sometimes show! He must have known that he was risking his freedom. A stream of abuse poured over him, and he would answer before a proletarian court. Ionov and his assistant there and then took down details, in the inflated style customary in such cases: (1) Tokaev had betrayed the trust of the Moscow Committee; (2) while on Party and State duty, Tokaev had eaten State bread, breaking the law; and (3) the stall-keeper had tried to defend Tokaev, giving rise to a suspicion of a Right-wing opportunist conspiracy between the two of them.

Ridiculous and unbelievable? Unfortunately, such ridiculous and unbelievable things do occur in the Soviet Union. But this was not so ridiculous as the mountain which the fanatics now proceeded to erect on this miniature mole-hill.

The protocol was drawn up and we all signed it, though I added a note to the effect that I had my own version of what had happened. The accusers departed, and we were left to count and check the day's taking of coupons, a tiresome job at the best, but a painful one when the mercury shows several degrees of frost and the only protection against the cold seeping through plywood walls is a

small Primus. I therefore suggested that we should all go to my hostel, and there complete the count in greater comfort. By doing this I apparently committed a second crime. Later that night, when Moscow was already settling down to sleep, the police arrived. The stall-keeper was taken, together with ourselves, to the Chairman of the Bauman Ward Party Supervisory Committee. A few hours later he was in prison, and it was not long before he was sent for a term of forced labour to expiate his "crime". My assistant student, a Party member like myself, got through with no worse than a *reprimand*. The fuss made about my own case was so considerable that it is worth describing in full.

It began the following day, with a special sitting of the Rykov Workers' Faculty Party Bureau. *Agenda*: The Tokaev case. *Report by*: Ionov. *Basic charge*: Right-wing opportunist attitude of a Party member towards State bread and the instructions of the Moscow Town Party Committee. What had "Right-wing opportunism" to do with it? Well, the inadequate reason is that any deviation at that particular time was thus qualified. A badly-written newspaper article was "Right-wing opportunism on the press front". A shirt too clean with too smart a tie was "Right-wing opportunism". Settlement of an argument by fisticuffs was equally "Right-wing opportunism". So was opposition to forced collectivisation. After all, at the moment of writing "warmonger" enjoys much the same universal application.

In due course my "crime" was more carefully analysed. It proved to contain the following elements: (1) loss of revolutionary vigilance; (2) invitation of a criminal plunderer (the stall-keeper) to a student hostel; (3) infringement of the Moscow Town Committee's instructions; (4) illegal consumption of State bread; and (5) non-resistance to a criminal plunderer.

I was now required to practice *self-criticism*. This meant not that I should think for myself, but that I should confess to the above "crimes" as defined in my indictment. This I refused to do, and was further incautious enough to declare that such feeble-mindedness, blind fanaticism and craziness in regard to State and Party matters could only be defined as political idiocy.

I really felt that the country must be going off its head, if such trifles could be puffed up into serious matters of State and principle.

Of course, what was wrong with the fanatics was fear. They were afraid of anybody who still thought for himself. They feared conspiracy, and strove to stamp it out, forgetting that if you try to stamp out non-existent conspiracies you go the best way to work

to create real ones. Engels was profoundly right when in a letter to Marx (on 4th September, 1870) he wrote: "We think of this"—i.e., the Reign of Terror in France—"as the reign of people who inspire terror; on the contrary, it is the reign of people who are themselves terrified. Terror consists mostly of useless cruelties perpetrated by frightened people *in order to reassure themselves.*"¹ Certainly those who accused me of crimes against the "world revolution" had very little comprehension of what that revolution really meant.

My refusal to indulge in idiotic self-criticism worsened my case, and the Bureau *unanimously* expelled me from the Party! However, their decision required confirmation by a general Party assembly, and this was arranged about a week later. With painstaking accuracy, every speaker, with the exception of Fedotov and Slonimsky (recently returned from an official trip to another part of the country), who acted as Secretary, repeated Ionov's stupid inventions. One speaker even demanded "handing over this disciple of Bukharin to the civil courts". According to rule, I was again given the last word, and again I refused to accuse myself of what I had not done. Instead, I lashed out at them. As a result, when it came to the vote, three abstained, six voted for me, and eighty-eight voted against me. As a result my expulsion from the Party was confirmed.

But still the matter was not ended. The system (unchanged to this day), now required the case next to go before the Bauman Ward Party Supervisory Commission. Again Ionov made an exposé, now adding to his accusations that I had not merely disregarded authority but had actually attacked it. I was cross-examined. Did I admit my guilt? I did not. "Who gave you the right not to admit your guilt?" "My own conscience, which knows very well that I committed neither a crime nor a mistake." "You grow impudent, Tokaev," shouted the Chairman of the Commission. "When the Party calls you to order, your conscience has no place, you must submit; you are forgetting the meaning of criticism and self-criticism." "Maybe," I replied, "but all the same I do not admit myself guilty." "Once again, in the name of the Party, I ask you if you admit your guilt?" "The Party is mine as much as yours," I answered. "And I have an equal right to speak in its name. In the name of the Party, no, I do not admit it, as I have done nothing wrong. Besides, your question is wrongly formulated: if you ask me whether I admit my guilt, it means that in advance you are stating

¹ Marx-Engels: *Selected Correspondence*. London, 1934, p. 303.

that I have committed a crime, but that is precisely what I deny."

His next words were characteristic: "The fact is established by the protocol which you yourself have signed." In other words, the mere accusation is in itself the finding of guilt, and all that follows is a dramatic depiction of the matter, a sort of ritual.

Of course, I continued to argue. I referred to the qualifying note I had added to the protocol. Moreover, the protocol stated clearly 100-150 grammes (roughly, three to four ounces), but the chairman of the commission would persist in talking about "State bread", as if it were 100 tons, or even 100,000 tons. Again came the fanatical logic: "The amount which you consumed has no bearing on the principle, all that matters is that you did eat, thereby breaking instructions and treating your duties in a Right-wing opportunist manner."

Against this sort of thing, how can one argue?

Again given the opportunity to speak last—which in fact means to indulge in "self-criticism"—I remained silent. The commission therefore unanimously approved the previous decisions, and my Party card was taken from me.

Two days later, the Bureau of the Rykov Workers' Faculty Comsomol branch met. Of this, it will be remembered I was a member. I was, of course, removed from it and from my work as head of the Agitprop. I became an expelled non-Party creature, something far, far lower than a mere non-Party person. It represents the lowest degree of existence in the Soviet Union. It closes all doors in your face and robs you of all friends but those of exceptional courage. Of such, I had four; Fedotov, Slonimsky, Sobolev and Smirnov, vigorously supported by Belinsky, who belonged to another Party branch. These all insisted that I should appeal to higher authority while the matter was still fresh. I did so, and after some time the Moscow Town Party Supervisory Commission recommended the Baumann Commission to review my case and reduce my sentence. I was therefore at last restored to the Party, but with a stern reprimand and a warning that next time I should not escape so lightly, and these facts were duly entered in my dossier.

MEMBER OF THE NEW ELITE

IN THE spring of 1932 I took my diploma at the Rykov Workers' Faculty and prepared to enter the Steam Locomotive Construction Faculty of the Moscow Higher Technical Institute, named after Baumann. At that time I was determined that politics would never play any part in my life, and nothing was farther from my thoughts than anything connected with military matters.

In the U.S.S.R., however, man proposes, but the State disposes, particularly in the case of Party members. There is an institution known as the *Upravlenie Kadrami*, or Cadres Board. It is one of the many arms of the Central Committee of the Party, and it has its representatives in a large number of official places. Once you are a Party member, you are at the mercy of this body, and one fine day, together with many other young Moscow graduates who were Party members, I found myself included in the first *part tysiacha*, or "Party thousand" of that year, a carefully selected *élite* group destined for the colleges of the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs—the notorious NKVD (as it was then called; today it is a ministry, the MVD). Such Party thousands were selected for various branches of the public service; the aim was to inject into this or that sphere of public life a carefully prepared dose of Party material.

It would be silly to pretend that we were not, to a man, highly flattered by this selection, which meant that our seniors considered us the best graduates of our year. But we were also flattered by the actual fact that we were regarded as suitable for the colleges of the NKVD. It must not be forgotten that the NKVD was commonly referred to as the "vigilant guardian of all that the Revolution has won". We did not think of it at all as a loathsome, repressive organisation, but as a guarantee of the Soviet Union's peaceable development; it was Lenin's beloved child. Besides, we ourselves had never come into conflict with it—except in the matter of the expulsion from Leningrad of Fedotov and myself, but that we could only too easily write off as the error of some over-zealous comrades in Leningrad; after all, the stigma had soon been removed. Nor did I see the NKVD as one of the most powerful weapons by which the

collectivisation of the peasantry had been carried through. I saw it as the country's assurance against a return of the old order, which was then not so distant in time; the collectivisation and the method employed to achieve it were mistaken policy on the part of the Government, not the fault of the NKVD.

Such were the dazzling prospects of a career in the NKVD that who knows if, having started on it, I would not have been carried away by its temptations and ended up—not as an exile in a distant country—but as a Colonel-General of the MVD or MGB, which have succeeded the NKVD, busily organising the mass deportation of minorities, and the mass elimination of “foreign spies”. Though I think it is more likely that my Caucasian temperament as well as my principles would, sooner or later, have brought me into the company of other officers of the MVD who are constructing socialism in Soviet labour camps.

My “tail” saved me from either fate. There it was, in black and white—stern reprimand and warning, sanction No. 7. I was informed that I was unsuitable for the highest honour; in the NKVD everybody had to be spotless. I was therefore dropped from the first *part tysiacha*, but included in the next one to be formed; this was intended for the VVS, the military air forces. Here too considerable attention was paid to “tails”, but physical condition and intellectual accomplishment and training were regarded as of more importance. Each of us went before a special Military-Political Board, followed by a medical overhaul and an entrance examination. Some were then directed to the constructional units of the VVS, others to its intermediate schools, while a handful were selected for the famous Professor Zhukovsky Red Banner and Order of Lenin Military Air Engineering Academy, a key institution of the whole Soviet air force system. I was one of these, and thus, without previously giving a thought to such a career, I now stood a chance of crossing the threshold of what is perhaps the highest Military Academy of the Soviet Union. This surpassed any hopes I had ever entertained. At one stroke, it absolved me from the attentions of the NKVD, whose curiosity might well have been aroused by my dossier, and offered me a thrilling prospect of scientific studies.

Passed by the initial board, I sat for preliminary examinations in mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, Russian language, geography and other subjects, and passed with distinction.¹

I was not, however, to be quite so easily free of that “tail”. Very

¹ In the U.S.S.R. examination papers are marked (1) bad; (2) unsatisfactory; (3) satisfactory; (4) good; (5) with distinction.

soon after entering the Academy I was summoned by the head of the Academy's Political Department. "Comrade Tokaev," he said, "we have information that you were once expelled from the Party for Right-wing opportunism; you did not inform us of this nor did you mention it in the autobiography you sent in to us. Why was this?" I replied that, on the contrary, I had included details of this incident in my autobiographical notes, and had also stated the sanction administered. "That was insufficient," he said, "you should have stated that you were expelled at Bureau level, at a General Assembly of your branch, by the Baumann Regional Commission, and that you were only re-instated after lengthy appeals. You should also have mentioned the basic political charges levelled against you."

The Commissar was quite right. A Party member has no right to conceal anything, even trifling details. His autobiography has to be a sort of complete medical history, so that those who treat him next should know all that has ever ailed him. It has to start with his ancestors, and it must indicate what he has thought in the past about Stalin, Molotov, Trotsky, Bukharin and any other key figure.

A special investigation was now undertaken by Engineer-Colonel Baranov, one of the teaching staff of the Academy, a civilised and moderate man who was later to become a firm friend of mine. He told me that the cause of the enquiry had been a denunciation sent in after I had entered the Academy by a certain Foma Tavger. Tavger had sat on the same school benches as I did, was in the same Party branch; he was a member of the same student hostel and had entered the Academy together with me. I had, however, no reason to be surprised, for in the days when I was in charge of the propaganda section of my Comsomol branch, he had actually come to me to denounce a Consomol girl with whom he was flirting and whom in fact he eventually married!

At last this submerged reef was negotiated, principally thanks to Baranov, and in June, 1932, I was formerly enrolled as a student of the Exploitation Faculty of the Zhukovsky Academy. I had become an officer of the VVS with the rank of A-4, which corresponds to that of Captain in the present-day system, for at that time officer titles were still out of favour and ranks were denoted by a system of numbers.¹ Until yesterday I had been dressed in a Chaplinesque

¹ The following table gives the numbers and their corresponding ranks:

COMMAND RANKS.	ENGINEER-TECHNICAL SERVICE.
K10 Chief Marshal of Aviation (Marshal of the Soviet Union)	T10 Colonel-General of the En- gineering-Aviational Service (Soviet short form: IAS).

costume—an ill-fitting tunic bought in Leningrad, trousers off the peg, a shoddy shirt and worn-out boots. Now I was fitted out by the Academy; I had well-tailored khaki uniforms, made of excellent cloth, for work and for going out, an ample supply of good linen, shoes of the best leather, even gloves for every day and for parade, and all the little toilet and other necessities which help to make life comfortable. Until now I had made my lecture notes on wrapping paper and the margins of newspapers; now I had notebooks in plenty, pencils, pens, rubbers, and all the mathematical instruments I could need. For years I had eaten sparse, rough food in my canteen; now I had sufficient rations for a married man with a family and, in addition to these, for which I paid nothing, I could get excellent meals at our mess at fantastically low, subsidised prices. While ordinary civilian students never received more than 35 roubles a month with which to buy everything, the least any of us got for pocket money was 170 roubles a month—more than the wages of any fully employed skilled worker at that time.

It was all enough to turn a young man's head. The plunge from smelly poverty into the sweet-odoured and replete company of the

COMMAND RANKS.	ENGINEER-TECHNICAL SERVICE
K 9 Marshal of Aviation (Army General)	T 9 Lieutenant-General IAS
K 8 Colonel-General of Aviation	T 8 Major-General IAS
K 7 Lieutenant-General of Aviation	T 7 Engineer-Colonel
K 6 Major-General of Aviation	T 6 Engineer Lt.-Colonel
K 5 Colonel	T 5 Engineer-Major
K 4 Lt.-Colonel	T 4 Engineer-Captain
K 3 Major	T 3 Senior Technician-Lieutenant
K 2 Captain	T 2 Technician-Lieutenant
K 1 Senior Lieutenant	T 1 Junior Technician-Lieutenant
K 0 Lieutenant	Senior Sergeant-Motorist
K 0 M Junior Lieutenant	Sergeant Motorist (also known as <i>starshina</i> , or "head-man")
Sergeant	Motorist (or other such specialised title)
Ranker	Ranker

The use of military terms in the "Engineer-aeronautical service" denoted in Russian by the letters IAS, often gives rise to some confusion. The position is perhaps made clear if it is explained that the *military* part of the title on the IAS side of the Air Force of the Soviet Union is of purely administrative significance. It plays no part in assessment of absolute standing, which is judged by the prefix "Engineer" given except in the case of rare honour to inventors—only to persons with the highest educational diplomas in their subject. It may even happen that an Engineer-Captain is in a position equal to that of a Major-General on the purely military side.

Until 1935 it was a counter-revolutionary insult to call a man by any of these titles, and the only signs of rank were enamelled number plates, in our case surmounted by small brass wings. The letters P and M were also possible variants, denoting Political and Medical branches of the service.

élite was a physical shock. Moreover, here in the Academy where, with few exceptions, all the men were Party members, I rubbed shoulders with men of rank and had daily contact with the leading minds of Soviet science. Life was full of snobbish satisfactions and of mental stimulation.

The price of all this was intensive study. "We look after you in every way," said the officials of both the Political and the Studies Departments, "we have freed you from material cares. Therefore we require of you uninterrupted progress. You have the best lecturers in the U.S.S.R. and unlimited opportunities to get advice on every aspect of your work, so do not complain if our examination standards are high."

We did not have a single hour to spare, summer or winter. Every moment of our long days was planned for us. To get a day or two for our own affairs was an achievement of tenacity and art, of manoeuvring, working out excuses and deceiving our Commanding Officers, not to speak of the effort required not to fall behind in our studies. Twice annually there were examinations—in January and in July—and, especially in higher mathematics and mechanics, aerodynamics and flightdynamics, these were savage tests. A low marking inevitably resulted in a moral-political drubbing from those in authority, with charges to answer before the Political Department, the Studies Department, the Head of one's Faculty, the Faculty Commissar, the Head of the Lecture Course, as well as before a meeting of the Party Bureau and the General Party Assembly.

Thus, despite the material comfort in which we lived, a considerable number of us failed to stay the course. Many were discharged with shattered health; others, harder to break physically, could not stand the mental pace. There is no question but that one reason for the great loss of intellectual manpower was the insufferable nag of political education. Not every man who was capable of becoming an excellent engineer could endure that lunatic tension of incessant, fanatical study of the day-to-day official interpretation of dogma.

Those were the hardest years I think I shall ever know, and they were made much harder because they coincided with the years of the first Stalinist Purge—1934-38. What kept up my resistance, apart from a young and exceptionally healthy body, was the will-power I had trained in myself, inspired by that injunction which I repeated inwardly a thousand times: "Man, be thyself." Indeed, the time came when I found myself often saying these words out loud, and also adding to them: "and not a beast"; and there were periods when I only kept myself from saying too much by developing a

savage taciturnity. The Southerner with his too ready tongue was—as far as laid within his power—learning to be a sphinx, though, as will be seen, the truth would out in the end. My body and brain went through the motions of my mechanised existence while my heart and my spirit cried out secretly in protest—but they also disciplined me to carry through to the end. I was genuinely proud of my Academy, of the first-class Laboratories and the outstanding readers, and of the tradition of Zhukovsky, the father of flying of the U.S.S.R. and one of the greatest aeronautical authorities in the world. I was determined to master my subject and become an aeronautical engineer, but the going was very hard.

THE RED AIR FORCE AND THE ZHUKOVSKY ACADEMY

HERE I should like to give a brief survey of the organisation of the Soviet Air Forces in general and of the Zhukovsky Academy in particular.

The Soviet Air Force rivals those of Great Britain and the United States both in numbers and quality, while, particularly since the intake of expertise after the Second World War, it may well take first place in matters of organisation, training, aerodynamics, as well as in methods of construction and stability estimation. This vast service embraces everything to do with flying in the Soviet Union; the whole of it—from the Minister at the head to the lowest ranker and from the research laboratories to the machines in the air—is directly under the control of the Party leaders. It is the Politbureau (recently for a brief period the “Praesidium of the Central Committee”) which lays down all plans—the structure of the Military and Civil Air Force, its numbers, the proportion of one arm to another, the aims, strategy and tactics to be pursued, and every detail of organisation. The Air Force, the men who design the machines and the factories which build them, are all part of the same closely integrated monopoly, and this monopoly is completely controlled from the Kremlin. At the moment of writing these pages it is Bulganin who holds in his hands the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, while Malenkov (as well as now being Premier) directly controls the aircraft industry and all research on aeronautical problems. No basic decision regarding aviation can be taken without the signature of these two men.

The Soviet Air Force (or VVS from the initials of Military Air Forces in Russia) embraces:

1. An Army Air Force under the Ministry of Defence, headed by its own supreme administration and by its own GOC who holds the rank of Deputy Minister of Defence;
2. A Fleet Air Arm (VVS-VMF) under the Admiralty;
3. A Strategic Long Range Air Force (ADD) which in

peace-time is under the Chief of General Staff, but in war-time under the Supreme Commander of all the armed forces (in the Second World War this was Stalin). It has its own GOC who holds the position of special plenipotentiary of the Chief of General Staff; and

4. A volunteer Society of Auxiliary Aviation (the GOSAF), serving all forces jointly, this being a para-military organisation for the mass training of reserves, with its own commander, but counting as a section of the Ministry of Defence.

Civilian aviation consists of (1) a civilian air fleet (GVF) with its own administration attached to the Council of Ministers and its GOC dependent directly on the Government (in war-time the GVF automatically becomes an auxiliary of the Strategic Long Range Air Force, ADD); (2) an Air Force system which serves and is attached to the agricultural, postal, health and other services.

In addition there is also a separate Air Force, that of "Special Duties" (AON), which belongs to the Ministries of the Interior and of State Security, the MVD. This has its own uniform and officers, up to the rank of General, its own aerodromes and aircraft and its own budget. It is subordinate exclusively to the Ministers of the MVD and carries out responsible tasks such as the transport of the leaders, the transfer of spies and saboteurs and the carrying of secret papers, at home or abroad. Its true allegiance is sometimes concealed under ordinary military Air Force uniform.

All engineering aircraft matters are handled by the Ministry of Aeronautical Industry, and as there are no private independent or cooperative firms, the concentration of power in the hands of this Ministry is very great. Since before the death of Stalin, the Minister in charge has been directly responsible to Malenkov, who has therefore, in practice, an authority under the armed forces as great as that of Bulganin. The concentration of aeronautical power in the hands of these two men is considered to have many advantages: it allows for high level coordination of the production and the use of aircraft, it excludes rivalry between the two systems, and it simplifies State planning. There are, of course, also some drawbacks, but these are thought to be of lesser importance.

The supreme planning organ is the State Planning Committee, or Gosplan, under the Council of Ministers. This body takes account of the long-term political strategy laid down by the principal dictators and determines (1) the total sums to be invested in aviation; (2) the requirements of the aircraft industry in material and equipment;

(3) the amount and proportions of production; and (4) the number and special training of engineers and other cadres. When these matters have been agreed, the plans of the various sections of the aeronautical services are drawn up under the joint supervision of Malenkov and Bulganin, who sign the plan simultaneously as Party leaders and governing persons. This means that in due course every factory manager and every Commanding Officer receives a precise programme of activity, which requires unquestioning fulfilment, since it amounts to a State law.

At the head of the whole network of systems is the "GUVVS"—the General Administration of the Military Air Forces. This body occupies a large building in Bolshoy Pirogovsky Street in Moscow; in size and ramifications it transcends any western ministry. It includes the following twenty-three principal branches, apart from minor sections:

1. The office of the GOC and his deputies;
2. The vast Political Administration, which has nothing with which it can be compared in the Western world;
3. The Principal Headquarters of the Military Air Forces;
4. The Intelligence Department;
5. The Administration of Strategy and Tactics of the VVS;
6. The Administration of the Head Engineer of the VVS;
7. The Administration of Technical Development of the VVS;
8. The Industrial Orders Department;
9. The Maintenance Department;
10. The Aircraft Department;
11. The Aircraft Engines Department;
12. The Aircraft Armament Department;
13. The Aerial Photography and Cartography Department;
14. The Aircraft Radio-technical and Electrical Department;
15. The Aerodrome Service Department;
16. The Cadres Department;
17. The Department of Aviation Academies, Colleges and Schools;
18. Scientific-Technical Committee;
19. The Department of Aviation Publications;
20. The Experimental Aircraft Design Department;
21. The Aviation Instruments Department; and
22. The Department of State Security.

The personnel of many thousands employed in this labyrinth consists, with the exception of a few women secretaries and typists

(who themselves are members of military families), exclusively of officers of all ranks and specialities, the majority of whom have been educated in the Military Aviation Academies. Part of the brain of the whole system is provided by the Zhukovsky Academy, and the following brief survey of the position and nature of this institution may be useful for a clear understanding of Soviet aeronautics.

The Zhukovsky Academy is one of the six top educational establishments which train the senior personnel of the Soviet flying services. There are three colleges which prepare Commanding Officers: The Red Banner and Military Air Academy at Monino in the environs of Moscow, the Air Force Section of the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow, and the Air Force Section of the Voroshilov Naval Academy in Leningrad. These institutions concentrate on tactics, strategy and organisation; such subjects as aerodynamics, engine theory, electrical and radio technology, armament and so forth are of course also taught, but only superficially. The standing of the Voroshilov Academy is shown by the fact that no officer lower in rank than Lieutenant-Colonel is to be found in it; the majority are at least Generals.

The other three Academies prepare engineering and scientific personnel. The Red Banner and Aero-Engineering Academy of Leningrad turns out engineers specialised in aircraft; the higher Military Aviation Engineering College of Riga specialises in maintenance problems; but by far the most important is the Zhukovsky Academy.

Professor Nikolay Yegorovich Zhukovsky, after whom the Academy is named, was born in 1847 and died in Moscow in 1921, shortly after the Revolution. It was he who laid the foundations of Soviet flying. In 1919 Lenin pronounced him to be "The father of Russian Aviation", and he is still regarded with pride by all Soviet aviation scientists, including myself. To grasp the importance accorded to flying in the Soviet Union, and the solidity of the foundations on which its great tradition has been built, one needs only to glance at Zhukovsky's work. Though the Stalinists have made themselves ridiculous by their claims that everything important was first invented by Russians, it nevertheless remains true that Zhukovsky was a great pioneer.

His *Stability of Motion* (1882) is a basic work, which even today is of theoretical interest. In 1886 he became a professor of Moscow University and he also taught at the Higher Technical College; from this time onwards he devoted his principal energies to the problems of flight, publishing altogether some one hundred and eighty books,

treatises, papers on aerodynamics, hydrodynamics, hydraulics, mechanics and the dynamics of flight. Among them are: *The Theory of the Propeller*, *A Theory of Bombing*, *The Cinematics of Fluids*, *The Theory of the Helicopter*, *A Theory of Profiles*, *The Mathematical Theory of Aircraft Stability*, and the famous theorem known as the *Kutta-Zhukovsky Theorem of Aerodynamical Lift*.

In 1908 Zhukovsky began lecturing on practical problems of aeronautics, and organised the first flying training courses in Russia, producing among others outstanding Russian and Soviet flying authorities, such as Yuriev, Kulebyakin, Tupolev, Vechinikin, Ushakov, Stechkin, Mikulin, Klimov and Mussinyants. A little later, he founded the first aerodynamics laboratory in Russia, and was directly responsible for its erection. His work and position are to be compared with those of the Englishman Stanton, the Frenchman Eiffel, and Prandtl in Germany. On the foundations of Zhukovsky's laboratory stands today the formidable research plant known as the Central Aero-Hydrodynamic Institute (TZAGI), equipped with numerous excellent wind and gas tunnels and a great range of experimental laboratories of all kinds. The outlines of all this were laid down by Zhukovsky himself, after the Revolution, shortly before his death. At about the same time—in 1919—Zhukovsky also founded what was then known as an Institute of Engineers of the Red Air Fleet, and this in 1923 was reorganised into the present Zhukovsky Academy. It is a vast university which provides facilities for study and research at the highest level, and specialises in aeronautics just as European universities used to specialise in the humanities. It is no longer regarded as practical in the U.S.S.R. to have the many subjects necessary for the technology of aviation studied piecemeal, as they still are in some countries; they are a "world" of study and research in themselves. Indeed, they are so abstruse that students are admitted to the Zhukovsky Academy as a rule only after they have had a normal university preparation. The Academy, in other words, is a post-graduate university in the old sense. No doubt elsewhere the same higher studies and research are pursued, but the institutions where such work is done are not so centralised as in the Soviet Union, nor are they given such distinguished status.

When I entered the Zhukovsky Academy, the Soviet Air Forces were headed by Yakov Ivánovich Alksnis, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, and at that time a K-10, later to be ranked as "Komandarm", which in army terms corresponds today to Army General. Alksnis was a man of great

revolutionary merits and of boundless energy; I have no doubt that he was the most competent and the most authoritative of all those who have ever headed the Soviet Air Forces. He required of us ever to bear in mind that an aeroplane is the material expression of the sweat and tears of the workers, and for this reason should be treated with honour and respect. He visited our Academy almost every week. Sometimes he would come without adjutants or guards, about four or five in the morning, just to make sure for himself that everything was in order and "ready for action" in the lecture halls. He was merciless to idlers and those who would not pull their weight. During the terror following the assassination of Kirov, he devoted himself with all his energy to protecting his juniors from arbitrary arrest and maltreatment. As I shall relate below, I owe my very life to Alksnis.

The great work done by the Soviet Air Force is known, but little is known of the debt it owes to Alksnis, who in 1937 was degraded to the ranks, subjected to torture, sentenced to penal servitude for life and later shot. Alksnis and a number of his immediate assistants deserve every honour. The fate of those men is my sorrow and should be the sorrow of every man who loves freedom, honour and humanity.

In 1932 the Zhukovsky Academy was commanded by Comandarm Sergey Gavrilovich Hor'kov, a man of great distinction. Under him, on the political side, were two other excellent men, Army Commissar Indrikson and Corps Commissar Volodarsky. It was these three men who, despite the inertia and obstruction they had to fight, made of the Academy a genuine centre of study and research. They were rewarded with arrest and degradation. Even if they are still alive, they are lost among the millions of the slave workers. Of Volodarsky I know that he was sent in 1938 to the Karelian Republic to work in the timber industry, but after that all trace of him was lost.

Others suffered a similar, if not always so terrible, a fate. There was Divisional Commissar Smolensky, for instance, who was Volodarsky's deputy. I am no lover of Commissars, but among them Smolensky was a fine exception. I attended the Party Assembly which tried him. Regimental Commissar Petrov demanded his expulsion from the Party, but for once there was not the usual chorus of lick-spittles and the demand met with little response. This enraged Petrov so much that he shouted: "I tell you, Smolensky is an Enemy of the People, because he was in touch with Todorsky, who has been condemned as an Enemy of the People!" As if Smolensky could have been Todorsky's second-in-command without being in touch with him!

What was the machinery which made it possible for these men to be charged and condemned? To understand this, it is necessary to understand something of the political set-up in the Zhukovsky Academy.

In the Academy, as indeed everywhere else in the Soviet Union, normal studies are intertwined with political training, and this is looked after by a special "Political Department", which is a sort of inner Academy, staffed exclusively with Commissars and working on its own large special budget. The political department comprises:

- (1) a Section for Agitation and Propaganda;
- (2) a Section for Cultural-Educational work;
- (3) a Section for Party Organisational work;
- (4) a Group for Work among Comsomol and Non-Comsomol Youth;
- (5) a Section for Work among Families of Military Personnel;
- (6) a Section for Work among Academy and Trade Union Staff engaged from outside the services;
- (7) a Library Section;
- (8) a Press Section;
- (9) an Archive Section handling all Party, Comsomol and Trade Union papers;
- (10) a Garrison Party Supervisory Board, commonly known as the "Party Board".

The work of the *agitprop* section is to organise lectures, discussions and reports on all long-term and current questions of Party policy, including all problems of inner-Party and inner-army ideological life. Such functions took place at least twice a week, and embrace the whole Academy, not only teaching staff and students, but also administrative staff and outside employees. For example, if some public figure in another country makes an anti-Soviet pronouncement, the *agitprop* section goes into operation at once, and sees to it that every sub-division of the Academy, including the highest scientific brains of the Soviet Union, studies what has been said and the proper attitude to be adopted to it; in other words, every political event of the slightest real or apparent importance in the world, if it is held to touch the interests of the Soviet Union, is thoroughly thrashed out in an organised way and the official attitude towards it is laid down.

The cultural-educational section handles the purchase of periodicals and newspapers, books and films, the organisation of concerts and other entertainments, including even dances, as well

as the home education of members of the families of the Academy personnel.

The Party-organisational section works to periodically drawn-up plans and handles conferences of the secretaries of Party branches, meetings of Party Bureaux, and closed or public Party assemblies, conferences and plenary meetings, at which a wide range of subjects come under discussion, from international politics to private matters between Party members. Its activities and its thoroughness would amaze the members of a Western university. For instance, if a lecturer fails to get through the prescribed amount of work in the given time, he will first be called before the Party Bureau, then before a Party Branch Assembly; his statement will be heard and criticised, he will be given directives, the reason for his slowness will be elucidated, and a decision will be taken to warn him and urge him in future to eliminate delays and not to spoil time-tables. If a Party member is seen to be drunk, or has a violent quarrel with his wife, the same procedure will be observed. Indeed, there is generally more on the Party plate than can be digested by all the countless assemblies and sessions called. The Comsomol and Trade Union sections do much the same work.

The section for work in the homes of Academy personnel handles loyalty to Marx-Lenin-Stalinism in the home, and ensures that wives are worthy comrades of their husbands, if these are studying or working at the Academy.

The library section handles such matters as the display of slogans and portraits of leaders in clubs, as well as its more normal library work. It should be noted that all libraries in the Academy, whether general or scientific, are in the charge of the Political Departments.

The press section publishes a newspaper with a circulation of thousands. The garrison Party Supervisory Board deals with Party, Comsomol and Trade Union expulsions and the acceptance of new candidates and members. Up to 1937 some 95 per cent of the military personnel of the Academy were candidates or members of the Party. The Academy was then still considered a centre of Right-wing opposition, and the Party branch was waging a tense struggle with the Party Supervisory Board for every member and candidate; since that time, however, the Party Board has won, and this now constitutes a sort of inner Party political police service.

The archive section works behind steel doors. It issues Party cards, maintains Party records and files of life histories, minutes of assemblies, conferences and so forth. With its monumental coffers and safes, this section dates from the time of the assassination of Kirov.

The final result of this labyrinth of controlling machinery is that not a word can be pronounced, not a word published, not a political report read, not a film shown, not even a dead man buried without the directive and agreement of the Political Department. Composed of some officers of military merit and others who are merely career rogues of the political services, this large body of supervisors rules the entire political and mental life of the Academy and of each one of its individual members.

Under the Head of the Academy there are three deputies and one assistant: (1) The Political Deputy, or Commissar, who heads the political department; he maintains tutorial groups in every faculty, while the head of each faculty also has his own commissar deputy of the political side, who handles all Party, Comsomol and Trade Union branches in the faculty and its subdivisions. (2) The "Special Department" Deputy, who is in fact subordinate not to the Head of the Academy but, jointly, to the MVD. This department maintains its own secret network of agents among both the students and the teaching, administrative and other personnel.

Thus, from top to bottom, this huge university is not merely controlled by an open Political Department, but also supervised by a secret system which itself further supervises and controls the open Political Department. It is no exaggeration to say that no man in the whole system, from laboratory assistant or boiler-tender up to the very top, ever knows which of those with whom he works and rubs shoulders every day is in reality a Special Department spy!

The Third Deputy—for Study and Research—is the most important person on the reputable side of the Academy's work. He is Chairman of the "Learned Council" (or Scientific Council) composed of some thirty leading academicians, professors, docents, doctors of science and candidates of science, including most of the heads of faculties and laboratories. To belong to the Learned Council is considered a great honour. Candidates are appointed jointly by the Minister of Higher Education and the GOC of the Military Air Forces. The Council meets about once a month and considers (1) draft schemes of studies for undergraduates; (2) manuscripts of proposed new handbooks, the publication of which it approves or disapproves; (3) the result of the scientific research in the expiring period and plan for the forthcoming period; (4) scientific and methodological questions and disputes; (5) proposed new lecture schemes; (6) the research and teaching work of individual members of the staff; (7) directives issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and other Institutions interested in the academic work of

the University; (8) proposed Doctorate and Fellowship theses; (9) recommendation of candidates for higher degrees; and (10) plans for the publication of the scientific work of the Academy.

In fact, the Learned Council has proved an innovation of immense value to students and research workers. Imitated in provincial universities, however, it tends to prove less useful, simply because a small university is not in a position to provide a sufficient number of men of the necessary standing to serve on it.

Another department in the care of the Study and Research Deputy is that of studies. At its head is an officer of Major-General's rank who is on the regular teaching staff of the Academy, assisted by other officers ranging from Colonel down to Captain, all of whom are graduates in Aeronautics and Engineering and most of whom have teaching experience. The principal function of this body is to organise studies in all branches; it not only looks after time-tables but also after the hygiene of mental labour and the rational combination of teaching and research work. In the Zhukovsky Academy every lecturer knows precisely where, when, to whom and on what he will lecture throughout the forthcoming term. Copies of the time-tables are sent to all lecturers and students as well as being posted on the boards, and no changes are allowed. It took a long time to establish this rule, but it proved most advantageous. The Studies Department is also responsible for ensuring a sufficient staff of qualified teachers.

The period of studies at the Zhukovsky Academy is five years. All general engineering subjects are read—higher mathematics, theoretical mechanics, hydrodynamics, statistics, aerodynamics and so forth; the Academy rivals the best in the world in its particular field. The only peculiarity is the inclusion of Chairs which elsewhere are not known, namely those of (1) the rudiments of Marx-Lenin-Stalinism, (2) the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (3) Political Economy, and (4) Dialectical and Historical Materialism, subjects which are considered as indispensable for the future aeronautical engineer as aerodynamics and higher mathematics. In all of them there are lectures, group studies, examinations, attestations of standing and practical tests.

The rudiments of Marx-Lenin-Stalinism are studied in the first year. Halfway through this begins a course on the history of the Party. Political economy only starts in the second year, while dialectical and historical materialism, classified also as "philosophy", are taken in the third and fourth. The standard textbooks are: (1) the collected works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, (2) *The*

Short Course of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (3) *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* by Stalin, and (4) Stalin's *On Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. In addition, the library contains a wealth of other political literature, to which the student is directed. The examinations require a thorough mastery of the subject and evidence that the candidate is capable of wielding Communist theory in a reliable manner. The following indication given by Stalin is equivalent to a law governing this work and regarded as absolute. "Young cadres in the Soviet Union are commonly trained separately in the various specialised branches of science and technology, which is right and proper, since there is no essential need for a specialist in medicine to be at the same time a specialist in physics or botany, or vice versa. But there is one branch of science which is obligatory for all Bolsheviks, in whatever other branch of science they may specialise. This is the Marxist-Leninist science of society, of the laws of development of society, of the laws of development of socialist construction, of the victory of communism. The man who is limited by his speciality, say, mathematics, botany or chemistry, cannot be considered a real Leninist . . ."¹

This directive is implemented literally and incessantly. We were not given a single mathematical formula without a dose of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. There is not a single aeronautical engineer or specialist in the U.S.S.R. who has not had a radical Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist grounding. Here is the fundamental difference between Western and Soviet experts.

Further, in every single rank and file branch of the Party, in every class or group of pupils, there are so-called "current politics study-circles", in which, not less than three times a month, time taken out of ordinary study hours is devoted to the mugging up of details which the lecturers might have overlooked.

In other words, while one part of the Academy teaches science, the other part maintains a high-pressure cramming in politics. Stalinism does not trust scientific thought which is not neutralised by political training.

Such were the mental strain and nervous tension induced by all this training that few of us could have stood it had our material conditions been no better than outside the Academy. But the régime reckoned with this difficulty. From the moment of his enrolment, the cadet-student wanted nothing; these were not free students of a liberal Western university, these were janissaries of a new order, aristocrats of a new kind in the scholastic world.

¹ Stalin, *Questions of Leninism*, 11th Russian edition, p. 598.

DISCIPLINARY ARREST

FOR THE FIRST two months of my life as Captain and Cadet, I was still quartered in the student hostel. Nothing could have served better to bring out the contrast between the two distinct levels of student existence. My old comrades were astounded at the quantities of good things I received. We had all been trained—and had trained others—to believe that the starved-beggar level on which we existed was the utmost that the country could afford while it strained every fibre to accomplish the first steps of industrialisation, and it was hard to believe that the same sacrifices were not exacted everywhere. This sharp differentiation of two types of student—the civilian and the military—was far more impressive than any treatise on the development of a new stratification of the community could have been.

At the same time, the luxury was very welcome. I could not conceive how I could ever need such quantities of linen or food for myself and proceeded at once to a general distribution. Bed linen went to married couples; married students with young children received sugar and butter, and I even emptied my pocket of money to a Caucasian fellow student, Nina Gvenitadze, who was in a state of abject poverty. After all, I considered, food, linen and money allotted to me became my property and I could do what I liked with them.

But these obvious acts of mere comradeship brought me into immediate conflict with the Academy authorities. The clash, no doubt, would have come sooner or later; I precipitated it by my own folly. For I gave away my first month's salary so thoroughly that the day soon came when I found myself unable to pay for my mess dinner. Without hesitation, I asked a fellow student to lend me a rouble or two till next pay-day. This man, however, was more thoroughly integrated than I was. Instead of merely saying "no", he immediately reported to Zhuravlyov (rank P-5, or Colonel on the political side), who was the Commissar in charge of our Company, that I was squandering my salary for shady purposes. Zhuravlyov sent for me and demanded full details, and I, still being through and through an ordinary civilian, declared that I would permit no such

supervision of the way I spent my own earnings. Zhuravlyov, however, had been in the forces since his early youth, and he knew that I did not belong to myself but to the Party and the State and the Armed Forces and that, consequently, he had every right to supervise every detail of my expenditure.

This was my *first* experience of meeting a military commissar, and there was a good deal of plain speaking on both sides. In the end the matter was taken up to Indrikson, the Academy's Chief Commissar ranking P-10, i.e., as Marshal. Indrikson, however, was a remarkable man, and neither the eight enamelled lozenges in loops of braid on his uniform nor the responsibilities of his post prevented him from treating junior ranks in a comradely fashion. He breathed the spirit of the early days of the Revolution. He began by apologising for having to meddle in my private affairs. Not only his political position but even ordinary military etiquette made such an apology completely unnecessary; but it immediately established between us an atmosphere of trust, and I explained the whole matter fully. I remember the look of deep concern on his face as he paced up and down the room, then came up to me and peered at me attentively. My explanation over, he suddenly asked me to tell him my life story. I was taken aback by this, and actually asked him what this had to do with the conditions in which students lived. "Perhaps it has no direct connection," he replied quietly, "nevertheless, I would ask you to tell me." Of course I did, far more readily as it was not an order, but a request. My father, my brother Andrey and I had always been alike in this: a harsh word roused the maximum of resistance in us, a human word opened our hearts.

Two days later I was again summoned by Indrikson, and now he told me that he had discussed the matter with the First Secretary of the Baumann Party Regional Committee, and had asked him to do what he could to improve the conditions of proletarian students. Such personal intervention is most rare in the Soviet world, and I saw it for what it was, an act of great personal bravery. To my astonishment, Indrikson went on to warn me not to hope for too much: even with the best will in the world, the Secretary might not be able to do a great deal. "What we need," he said, "are really radical measures on a national scale," and that was the job of the Central Committee and the Government. Here he suddenly broke off, but his tone and his expression told me more than further words could have done.

Of course, there had been nothing of a precisely critical nature in his actual words. But in the Soviet world one's senses become

sharpened and trifling episodes, gestures, silences, turns of speech acquire greater significance than they can ever have where men are free to say what they like. Here before me, in a position of great authority, was a *horoshy chelovek*; these words need not mean more than their bare dictionary sense of "decent fellow", but when we, who were critical, said them of a man in a position of authority we meant that he would not take us to task or put us on a charge for "dangerous thinking". Indeed, he himself had just expressed a thought which might easily be regarded as dangerous.

He went on to say that it was very good to see that we, representatives of the younger generation, were troubled about the workers in the name of whose well-being the Revolution had been made. Then again he hesitated for some time, and paced the room silently, hands behind his back, head down. Some weeks afterwards he asked me to go out with him, and we drove in his car to the Students' Hostel, officially for him to see in what conditions I, as a member of the Zhukovsky Academy, was living, but in fact to enable him to see the conditions of the civilian students for himself. On the way back, as I recall, he turned to me and said: "What I have seen, Comrade Tokaev, is very disturbing. But one man in the field cannot be a soldier by himself; the struggle for the improvement of the conditions of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. requires well thought out, organised work; it means keeping one another informed, helping one another. Union is strength." Of itself, this did not amount to a call to struggle against the Stalin-Molotov-Kirov dictatorship, but the words were undoubtedly significant. Even among the Commissars there can be fine characters, men of feeling and concern for others.

* * * * *

It was not, however, long before I gave Zhuravlyov a golden opportunity to get his own back, and it was all my own fault. It must have been at the end of my first month in uniform. Some two hundred of us, newcomers, were drawn up for inspection by the GOC Alksnis. The order came to stand at attention, the band struck up a march, and I saw a tall athletic figure approaching, accompanied by Hor'kov, Indrikson and Volodarsky.

The inspection began—a friendly word here, a joke there, until it came to my turn. After examining me from top to toe the great man said quietly: "*Ne naprygaytes*" ("Don't strain yourself"), and passed on to the next cadet. But I, like a fool, though standing with exaggerated stiffness to attention, replied as one man to another:

"But I'm not straining myself." Naturally, Alksnis had not expected a reply at all, and if I wanted to say something I should have used one of the formal phrases laid down by tradition long before the Revolution. I could have said: "*Tak tochno, Tovarishch Kommanduyushchy*" ("Precisely so Comrade Commander"), or else "*Slushayus*" (roughly "I hear and obey"). In a flash he was back at me. "What was that? Your name? Who is your commanding officer?" I could see Indrikson's and Hor'kov's pitying eyes on me. My platoon commander was a man named Byaller, of the same rank as myself, but a regular army man, a fellow who knew all about discipline, and Alksnis instructed him to teach me manners.

We rehearsed for hours at a time.

"Cadet Tokaev, don't strain when in the ranks."

"Precisely so, Comrade Commander."

"Cadet Tokaev, you had no right to argue with the GOC."

"Precisely so, Comrade Commander."

"Cadet Tokaev, I shall sentence you to CB for infringement of army regulations."

"I hear and obey, Comrade Commander."

"Cadet Tokaev, your boots are filthy."

This was more than I could bear. "My boots are filthy? I assure you they are not," I cried. "They are beautifully polished."

Poor Byaller, what was he to do with such "civilian democratism"? How could he teach such a fool? "What on earth am I going to do with you, Cadet Tokaev?" he cried, and all I could say was: "Teach me, Comrade Commander, teach me, something may come of it." "How can I teach you when you simply don't understand? I tell you your boots are filthy and look at what you say!" "But after all," I argued, "they are not filthy, look, you can almost see yourself in them." "Silence," yelled Byaller, "if I say they are dirty they are dirty."

He was right and I was wrong—I ought to have known that army discipline means above all that the superior officer is always right. Ah, but does it necessarily mean that? Had not the Revolution been born in the disintegration of an army of the old type, and had not one of its first promises been to create an army of an entirely new kind? Had not Stalin said in 1928 that the Red Army was distinguished by its organic unity with the people, its spirit of equality and internationalism, its fraternal relations between officers and men? And had not army ranks been abolished precisely to underline these qualities?

Why should an officer, calling a brightly polished pair of boots

filthy, expect the owner of the boots not to disagree? Besides, if I, taking Stalin's injunctions too literally, had failed in common politeness to the GOC, why should this not have been explained to me quietly, without shouting and threatening? Even now, after thirty years' military service including a great war, I still do not believe that the constant grinding down of junior ranks and their reduction to the level of automata ever increases the fighting power of any army.

I had to pay dearly for my aeronautical ambitions: I was willing and even anxious to learn military discipline, because life at the Zhukovsky Academy was worth such small sacrifices, but I found myself constantly in conflict with the authorities. In the summer of 1932 I even came to be charged with physically attacking a commissar! This is how that came about.

It was a blazing day in August. We were on a route march and the word was given to the Company to sing. The Company sang, all but Cadet Tokaev, who would not sing when bawled at to do so. Byaller halted us and ordered me to explain who had given me the right not to sing. He shouted at me, and I reminded him that Red Army regulations forbade the use of bullying methods, while there was no regulation making singing obligatory. He lost his temper altogether; finally so did I, and like a fool I reminded him that we were of the same rank and even that I too was a Party-thousand man!

The outcome was a spell of a field punishment in use at the Academy—standing for long periods at attention in front of a pillar of shame in the centre of the parade ground. After several hours in the broiling August sun I fainted, and was eventually dragged to Zhuravlyov's tent. There I was tackled by Byaller and Zhuravlyov together. While I was unconscious the duty officer had taken away my pistol; when I came to and discovered this I was furious: not only was I humiliated by being disarmed, but this particular pistol was one that my brother Andrey had left me and which I had received special permission to wear instead of the regulation issue. I warned Byaller and Zhuravlyov that I would never forgive this insult. Naturally this greatly worsened my position, for it was specifically against regulations to threaten a commanding officer.

It would be either a punitive company or a labour camp for me, pointed out Zhuravlyov: I had argued with the GOC, I had insulted Byaller in front of the whole Company, I had fainted on the parade ground, thus refusing to submit to disciplinary punishment, in fact I was disseminating "civilian democratism" and scorn for political

officers. I said it was unbelievable that in the Red Army political responsibility should be confided "to such blockheads as you, Comrade Commissar". Not unnaturally I found myself under strict arrest, with Red Army bayonets on either side of me.

Fortunately this was still in the relatively liberal year of 1932, and the Battalion Commander postponed sentence pending a full enquiry.

That same evening, however, Byaller and Zhuravlyov called a Party assembly and Byaller charged me not only with "disseminating civilian democratism" but with being a "bandit who tried to lay hands on me, tried to strike your Commissar". This, of course, was nonsense. The most I had done was to take his hand and lay it aside when he had tried to grab my arm. But now upwards of a dozen fanatics spoke up against me. They expelled me from the Party and resolved to request the Academy Command to expel me from the Academy and hand me over to a military court, as well as to give their attention to certain other cadets who were also infected with "right-wing opportunism" and "civilian democratism". The Battalion Commander's instructions were disregarded; I was taken at bayonet point to a solitary cell in the right wing of the Petrovsky Palace and locked up. (Curiously enough, when I became a lecturer at the Academy in 1941, this very room was for a short time my study.)

The snowball had been started, and Zhuravlyov rolled it from one Party office to another. My safe seclusion behind iron bars had loosened the tongues even of men I had thought my friends. Very soon I was not only an agent of Right-wing opportunism who had tried to lay hands on a commissar, but I had quite possibly tried to murder him for political reasons.

All at once the political charges were dropped. The affair reached the columns of the magazine *Vperiod i Vyshe* (Forward and Upward), but the article in it, printed over several signatures, had no word of "democratism" or "opportunism"—I was merely a potential murderer of a brainless criminal type.

It is an interesting point that this was, already, in miniature, the method applied later in the great Moscow trials. If the real reason for a prosecution was political—and the fanatics who attacked me must have guessed at my real spirit of criticism towards the régime—the actual charge was moral and criminal. Thus Bukharin was never charged with opposing Stalin's policy, but with causing the death of farm livestock and of plotting to kill Lenin. Piatakov was shot as a foreign agent, Zinovyev was charged with terrorist acts and sabotage,

Yenukidze, one of the most moderate men in the Kremlin, was, after his death, said to have "gone to pieces morally". To print the true story of my case would have meant to reveal that a young Caucasian thought there should be more comradeship between officers and men, and that was unthinkable; what appeared in the magazine was that I was the lowest of the low, a creature without any inkling of what decent behaviour meant.

I felt deeply insulted by this article, but I also reflected that my position was now serious. I had been in the Party six months and was now expelled for the second time, and about to face trial for assaulting a superior officer if not for attempted murder. The fact that the charges were fantastic was irrelevant. I might easily get fifteen years in a concentration camp.

The one who brought these facts sternly to my attention was Indrikson. Soon after my arrest he and Volodarsky came to see me. "Do you understand your situation?" he asked. Of course I understood, but this did not help. I was, I said, in the land where the Byallers and the Zhuravlyovs wielded the dictatorship, and at this frank observation Indrikson turned to Volodarsky and nodded significantly. My anger at the charges brought against me had restored my full sense of independence and I was determined to speak out. I said that neither the U.S.S.R. nor the world revolution would suffer if I were sentenced, but if the Red Army was to come under the mastery of professional scoundrels like Zhuravlyov the people would lose all its respect for it. Our Red Army would lose its reputation of being a revolutionary army; we would become the laughing stock of the workers of the world.

Indrikson smiled. "Let's leave the world revolution and the workers of the world out of it for the moment," he said. "You'd do better to tell me what I am to do with you—put you on trial or . . . ?"

If there was a reason for me to be tried, I said, it would certainly be the best thing for me to stand my trial—provided the law was not administered by the Zhuravlyovs, for the régime and the Academy heads would be sure to back them up, and who would back *me*?

"I shall back you!" Indrikson said sharply. I turned scarlet and stared at him—not because he offered me hope, but because this was indeed a brave man.

His attitude moved me the more because it was he who was the most angry with me for my folly. He talked to me like a father. He condemned my unpardonable behaviour, but he also condemned the fanatics' readiness to exaggerate and distort it.

At the end of my third week of solitary confinement, I was taken before Indrikson. I was a wild-looking figure, unshaven, unbelted, unkempt. In Indrikson's study I also found Hor'kov. "Comrade Tokaev," Indrikson said, "I have good news for you. Comrade Hor'kov and I consider that the Air Force needs you and that there is no reason to put you on trial and to ruin your career at the very outset. We also feel that the charges made against you are exaggerated and that there is no ground whatever for the charge of attempted assault on Commissar Zhuravlyov. Finally, as Bolsheviks, we cannot leave out of account the fact that you are a representative of a small people who in the past were ground down by Tsarist generals and governors. We have therefore decided to ask the General Officer Commanding the Air Force to reinstate you in the Academy and to quash the proceedings started against you. I shall also issue instructions for your expulsion from the Party to be reconsidered. What have you to say?"

I was too moved to speak. "Comrade Tokaev," said Hor'kov, and for some reason he took off his pince-nez, "you have a greater responsibility than other cadets; you come of a small nation with a glorious history, and you should live up to it."

Years later, when in the Second World War, the fact of belonging to a small nation—of not being a Russian—was sufficient grounds for exclusion from certain central institutions. I was often to remember that in 1932 two of the "big chiefs" could still give thought to a small non-Russian people. At the time, I need not add, their concern did a thousand times more to educate me than all the bullying in the world. They both understood this, and why I stood there tongue-tied, too moved to say anything.

That same evening I was free. The Academy orders, without giving any reason, merely stated that I had been under disciplinary arrest. In time, my Party membership was also re-examined, though here my previous expulsion made the going more difficult. In the end, however, my Party card was restored to me and a second entry was made in my dossier; as a result of long negotiations, the reason given was a trifling one.

UNDERGROUND

AT THE BEGINNING of my first summer vacation of six weeks I went to Leningrad to attend a meeting of a group of friends of similar views to my own. From there Belinsky and I travelled to the North Caucasus, with instructions from our group to enquire as closely as possible into conditions and to report on them. This was a somewhat risky undertaking, likely to get me into fresh trouble, but I considered it my duty to carry it through.

On my earlier visit home I had had a glimpse of the impoverishment which collectivisation had brought the countryside. We now travelled through the North Ossetian and Kabardino-Balkarian Republics, several districts of the Terek and Kuban Cossacks and a part of Ingushetia. These areas had once had a flourishing patriarchal agricultural life. The inhabitants were industrious and capable, lived in well-built houses set amid gardens and orchards, wore good clothes and maintained a decent standard of social behaviour. The villages were clean and well ordered. Even those families which, like our own, owned no land but worked for others, still had roomy cottages, large gardens, their own pigs, horses and even a cow. There was a solid background of material well-being based on industrious farming. There was individual initiative and on this, without destroying the foundations, many of us thought, could be built up a husbandry, useful to the country, producing ample supplies of grain.

Did the Stalinists genuinely believe that collectivisation was the only means to greater production, and did their policy really have this one aim in view? I do not believe it. For the Stalinist policy was heir to the Tsarist, and both the régimes feared the prosperity of the Northern Caucasus; they feared lest it provided a seed-bed for independent thought.

Now the countryside looked as if a ravaging army had swept over it; war, civil war, and then collectivisation had changed its face. Gates, and garden and field fencing had gone for fuel. Village streets were overgrown with weeds, for since upwards of two-fifths of the horses had gone altogether and the rest were stabled in the collective farms, they were now practically unused. Houses had not been

repaired since before the war; windows were broken, shutters hung by one hinge, roofing was missing; with every year winter erosion had thrust its fingers through the walls; the yards were empty for there were now no poultry, pigs or cows except in the collective farms. Through these ruined shells of homesteads moved the wraiths of men, gaunt figures only given human shape by the loose rags which half covered them. Party members or non-Party outcasts, hunger had destroyed and aged them all.

I had seen something of all this on my earlier visit, but now one more winter stood between me and the Caucasus I had known as a boy, when, driving my tractor, I dreamed happily of a golden age whose first bright rays seemed already to warm us.

Belinsky and I studied the conditions closely. They had to be seen to be believed. The soap we had brought with us was now a gift more precious than gold; the villagers had not seen any for years, for they could not even make their own household supplies as they had done formerly, boiling fat and wood ashes together—the fat did not exist any more and even the ashes were scanty. There was no sugar, no maize flour; so common a thing as maize porridge was spoken of as if it were a rare drug.

"Beggary, constant fear of terrorisation," we wrote in our report, "the loss of any sense of direction, all this is producing something worse than desperation, it is producing apathy. The reduction of life to its most primitive level has brought personal conduct down to great crudity. Out of the moral indifference comes the watchword: grab whatever you can. . . ." We reported that we saw people of all ages and conditions scattered over the fields grubbing for edible roots and herbs. We recorded that in the Kuban country all the dogs and cats had long been eaten, and people were reduced to living on rooks. We quoted the enormous prices paid for the mash left over from spirit distilling—almost valueless as nourishment, it nevertheless gave the illusion of food.

Back in Leningrad we handed our report to a highly placed Party official, and he arranged for us to attend a conference of agricultural Party men busy organising agriculture, at which Kirov was to be present.

Kirov had once himself been a revolutionary leader in the Northern Caucasus, and we hoped great things from his interest. We still saw ourselves as public-spirited citizens anxious to assist the Party; even at this late date we were convinced that it was enough to reveal the disastrous consequences of the Party's policy to get things put right.

Kirov had not known in advance of the preparation of the report nor who were its authors, yet he questioned us readily, and we naturally answered gladly. But Kirov, a fine orator and even a great politician, was a man of the utmost intolerance and impatience of the views of others, who loved praise and reserved the right of criticism exclusively for himself. After about twenty minutes, during which he often interrupted us and asked provocative questions, he tired of the unpleasant subject. Suddenly he raised his voice: "You can't lay it on as thick as this," he said. "You're not going to try to convince me that in the North Caucasus the conditions of the working class are bad. What are you after? Are you saying that the workers are worse off under the Soviet régime?"

Belinsky tried to answer him. We were not exaggerating: nothing had been laid on too thick. It was no use. "The Central Committee of the Party knows the position in the North Caucasus," Kirov snapped. "And there's no harm in giving these mountain folk and Cossacks a lesson either—they're all counter-revolutionaries by nature and it's just as well they should have something to remember. The North Caucasus is necessary to the Soviet Union for its wheat and its petroleum, and for that reason the Party and Government cannot possibly allow any trace of counter-revolution there. We are obliged to see that the régime is firmly established."

"We are obliged." Thus spoke Tsarist governors, thus wrote Tsitsianov, the Tsarist apologist of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, but it was not the language used by Kirov, Stalin, Ordzhonikidze or any other Bolshevik at the beginning of Sovietisation. If this was now indeed the Party's policy it was a grim outlook for us children of the Caucasus.

It is hard to explain to Western readers the nature of the dilemma with which we were now faced. What were we to do? Leave the Party? No. Men are expelled from the Party in the Soviet Union, but they never leave; to leave is to proclaim one's opposition and to do this is to sign one's death warrant. Should we then hold our tongues? That we could not do. Then speak out? But where, how, in a country where to speak out anywhere at any time meant the end?

There was, of course, only one answer: to speak, yes, but under cover, in other words to enter the underground. This sounds very fine and bold. It was, in fact, a course of great difficulty as well as danger. Starting underground work meant not only sooner or later facing accusations of treason and foreign espionage—free political activity is inevitably treasonable in the Soviet Union—it meant

facing the crushing admission that it was *not possible* to serve the country by frank, open criticism, that such service must give place to service by cramped groping in the dark, where small headway is made, where it is even impossible to assess whether any headway has been made, and where all is subject to the agonising rules which are the inevitable concomitant of such professional underground activity.

All this we knew and it was the last thing we wanted. But now that our attempt to state the facts openly was finally barred, underground work was forced on us. Our failure was the more discouraging because our attempt had not been a flash in the pan; it had been the result of careful preparation and had received powerful backing.

This was the conclusion at which I and a small group of comrades arrived in the autumn of 1932. This was the beginning of my *formal* adherence to an inner Party underground opposition faction. We now ceased to be part of the Stalinist machinery except so far as our formal adherence to the Party could be regarded as such, but this in any case was an essential cover for us. We felt fortunate in only one thing: we knew what we wanted, and in knowing this we knew that we were men. We found a name for ourselves—we were “revolutionary democrats”; this was our name for our ideal, the ideal of a society at the foundation of which stood not “social elements” but men.

What this meant in practice it is difficult to explain without assisting Malenkov's police ferrets. For the files are still there, the dossiers and the vast library of carefully indexed depositions and denunciations are intact. Often the mere mention of a name, a date, is enough to put the ferrets on the scent, their noses quivering on the track of every single person who had contact with so-and-so at such-and-such a time, with all the disastrous consequences of arrest and degradation. Stalin has gone, there is a great show of cleaning up, there is a shifting of labels, even an apparent change of landmarks, but the climate is the same, for it is the special climate without which totalitarian states cannot live; they breathe its special air in a special way, as primitive as coelacanths. Alas, this manner of breathing has continued over many generations. On the stock of the primitive police force of Tsarist days Stalin has grafted a new breed, more up to date, far more efficient, meticulously organised, and equipped with detailed records which are easily accessible to key investigators.

For this reason underground political work must also continue and it must also use new methods. In the West there are still people

who imagine that in "Russia" there are romantic bearded toughs who creep about after dark with sticks of gelignite in their pockets. Nothing of the sort. Tough we have to be, but our toughness is of nerves and brain. We are almost never people who do nothing else—a sort of Bohemian caste engaged exclusively in conspiracy and taking no part in the organised life of the country, like the professional revolutionaries of pre-Revolutionary days. It might indeed be said that the existence then of such a caste of professional rebels, out of touch with ordinary life and thought and consistently standing outside normal society, was one of the factors which account for Stalinism. Living in this way, as Stalin did, going on short terms of exile and returning to live like a thief on the run, was poor preparation for the leader of a great modern State.¹

Things in the U.S.S.R. today are very different. In the old times political convicts in exile often had a considerable degree of freedom and were given favourable, even respectful, treatment. Today political prisoners are treated the most severely of all. Once a political underground worker is caught, he is finished. And so all-pervading are the controls that those who do underground work are usually found to be men and women of some position in the official State apparatus—only they have in fact the slightest chance of doing opposition work effectively. Dostoevsky in his *Possessed* makes one of his characters describe the future "ideal" state, in which every man belongs to the community as the community belongs to him, and each spies on each. To the extent that this "ideal" has been realised, its corollary is that men who are in opposition and who, in so far as they are men, are forced into underground activity, continue apparently to be part of the system while already working against it. Stalin, by attempting to turn every man into a *homunculus*, has indeed made many *homunculi*, but he has also made men whose fate it is to serve him publicly by empty words, while dissembling him, working against him in secrecy and in substance, whenever feasible.

Thus, many of us were ordinary citizens, carrying on our public duties and often even loyally fulfilling our obligations to the services in which we worked. We took part in assemblies, we made speeches about the wisdom of Stalin and Malenkov, we called for "revolutionary vigilance"—even though we should have been its first victims. We gave orders to our subordinates, we produced blue

¹ Lenin, when in exile in Siberia, did keep the books of a kulak, with whom he got on famously, thereby learning much about the habits and preoccupations of ordinary men; but Stalin scorned to do such ordinary things.

prints, we wrote books which passed the censors—we were indistinguishable from Stalin's men because we had to be.

To work in such conditions necessitated a degree of caution which makes the conspiratorial methods of other countries seem childish. Two men could share a room for a couple of years without knowing that both of them were anti-Stalinists distributing the same anti-Stalinist literature. You could work with a man and share your leisure with him without having the slightest idea that he belonged to the very same underground organisation as yourself. In the central ministries and other top level institutions this fantastic degree of secrecy became the rule.

Such work required special qualities, and these had to be insisted upon more strictly than ever in the reign of terror after the assassination of Kirov. Before a man was enlisted and initiated into an underground organisation, he was observed carefully and long by those who had spotted him as a possible candidate. Inability to hold his liquor, a tendency to lose his head over women or to become unbalanced by some enthusiasm immediately ruled him out. Not that he had to have puritanical standards. On the contrary, a man who drank but remained sober was more useful than a teetotaller: he would be less conspicuous, and the fact that he was unaffected by alcohol was in itself an indication that he had a level head. The same was true of other forms of excitement or pleasure. No matter how brilliantly in other ways a man seemed fitted for the work, the slightest reason to suspect that he would not keep a secret, that he might by word or gesture give the enemy an opening, made it necessary to reject him; for this was the paramount consideration.

The "perfection" of the security services requires a corresponding "perfection" in the underground workers. In a new sense the words are applicable to them: many are called but few are chosen. Many are attracted and believe themselves well fitted, but few have the steel tendons for the fight against the system founded by the "man of steel".

The underground worker must be utterly ready for self-sacrifice. Other revolutionary movements, in other countries, under other dictatorships, have involved sacrifice; but never so completely, so mortally as in the U.S.S.R. Even under Hitler there was greater latitude for difference of opinion with the Government, and known disagreement, if persisted in, did not necessarily mean death.

Hard study is also necessary. For the Soviet régime is founded on dogma, on a certain manner of reasoning, on a sort of philosophy.



N. Bukharin, 1879–1938



M. Yenukidze (shot in 1937)

To be combated this must be properly understood, and it can only be combated by another manner of reasoning. A nation trained from childhood to regard its political, economic and social life as the implementation of a philosophy, will tend to think also of change in the terms of a philosophy. It is essential to know the philosophy of Stalinism, to know its very heart; only he who has become a master of Stalinism can combat Stalinism.

Other necessary qualities are those of the partisan fighter in the field of politics. It is not enough to be pugnacious, it is not enough to be able and prepared to carry out orders; it is essential to be capable of initiating and organising action oneself. This does not mean the ability to stage a full-scale revolution, but it does mean the ability to wage small but all-important battles in everyday life: sow the seeds of thought in others' minds, inspire the belief that it is possible for men to be men and not *homunculi*; seize on any of the countless openings given by permitted discussions of the Party line, engage in an argument without ever exposing oneself too far, and come out of it the victor, never discredited. It means never to forget that in this sort of activity what matters is not words or even acts, but the right words, the right act, the timely word, the timely act. The capacity to appraise a situation correctly is of the utmost importance.

I am often asked in the West if there are many such oppositionist workers in the Soviet Union. Before an answer can be given it is necessary to recall the structure of the Soviet State. To ask what percentage of its millions are underground oppositionists, as though they were evenly distributed, is to make the mistake of regarding these millions as so many millions of individuals who are more or less equal. There are vast spheres and fields of Soviet life in which there are no oppositionists at all; and there are cities and institutions—Government and Party institutions, ministries, boards of management, inspectorates, universities, schools—in which there are relatively large numbers of underground workers. Over all, of course, the numbers are small, very small. But then the number of men who control this fantastically centralised country is also very small. This is not to suggest that there are enough underground workers; obviously if there were the Soviet régime would have fallen long ago.

The need for the maximum of secrecy, quite apart from other factors, has had one disastrous effect on oppositional activity: there is not today a single powerful underground *democratic* organisation in the Soviet Union capable of speaking in the name of a single

national minority or of a single social stratum, let alone in the name of all the peoples of the U.S.S.R. Nevertheless, there have established themselves in every corner of the Soviet Empire groups of "bourgeois nationalists", "revolutionary democrats", "Bukharinists" and "true Communists", who have gone to earth; the most vital of these in terms of resistance are the "bourgeois nationalists" and nationalist Communists, whom in a general way we might call Titoists. These are on the uprise and in the next two or three years may be expected to resume their activities. I am not a Titoist. I am a revolutionary democrat. But the example of Marshal Tito has been a powerful psychological stimulus. If anybody since the annihilation of the Bukharinist opposition has earned the highest order for anti-Stalinist achievement, it must be the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and it is to Marshal Tito that any wind which in the Soviet Communist Party may blow up from the Right owes its inspiration. In this the steps taken to *decentralise* and *deconcentrate* both public authority and all industry in Yugoslavia have played a vastly important rôle. From my own knowledge of how men think in the Soviet Union, I have no hesitation in asserting that a free election in the U.S.S.R., with the Stalinists on one side and the Titoists on the other, would result in a victory for the latter; the "bourgeois nationalists" as well as the "national communists" would support Tito, were a choice imaginable.

I have drawn a picture of the monstrous difficulties which stand in the way of oppositional work in the Soviet Union. Basing myself not on fantasy but on my own hard experience, I have suggested that the smallest steps, which in other countries might pass unnoticed, are in the U.S.S.R. *battles* and, when achieved, *victories*. I draw a picture—and it is a true one—of rare individuals, striving almost without unity, certainly without knowing one another and without the additional moral strength which comes to men who are fighting openly and side by side—a picture as of too few men labouring to cleanse the Augean stables with miniature hand-forks, a picture of the toils of Sisyphus.

It may be asked whether such a fight is worth the efforts and the sacrifices. Do not think that we, in the Soviet Union, have never asked ourselves that question. At times we have felt like small ants trying to defeat an elephant with our tiny stings. But we have never been in doubt of the answer. There is no other way for us. Our answer is clear and unchanging and it can be formulated in these words: *nobody will ever parachute freedom to us*. The history of man teaches that freedom thus delivered ready-made is never freedom.

Freedom must be fought for and won by those who want and need freedom. Yes, fought for and won, for no ruling caste gives up its position voluntarily, and the chances of what is called political evolution are nil. On the other hand, the name and state of being a full man is too lofty and too proud a thing to be left, even if this were possible, for others to grant. As to the ultimate triumph of man in the Soviet Union there can be no doubt. But the struggle will be long, costly and fraught with tribulation; for neither Russia in the past nor the Soviet Union have ever known a single day of real freedom, of real democracy. Indeed, were the whole of that vast area today at the disposal of native forces composed of those who understand what a free realm means, there would not be enough such people for the task; to know democracy and cherish it, more and more men worthy of the responsibility must be forged in the long struggle.

Only with this clearly before our minds have we of the underground movement in the Soviet Union been able to justify to ourselves the effort and the losses involved. Over the last quarter of a century we have been laying foundations, creating precedents, working out the path to be followed. I myself set out on this road, together with my closest associates, only after persistent, painful thought and final conviction that by no other road was progress possible. It was a hard decision to take, and we only took it—and could only take it—after we were finally convinced that nothing else was practicable.

One more observation of cardinal importance regarding our decision. It is this: one means of achieving our aims we revolutionary democrats have consistently ruled out, and that is to seize the opportunity of an international war involving our country to stage a revolution. To admit for a moment that through a revolution bred of an international war we could achieve our aims, would lead to only one conclusion—that it would be right and proper to work to bring about a war, as though this were the fire, the crucible, in which the human elements, the traditions and the ideals of the peoples of the Soviet Union would fuse into a new society. This notion we reject as fundamentally false. It is false materially, for in any future war humanity would suffer losses which would be vastly greater than any possible gains; and it is false spiritually, for even if it were not for the terrible loss in lives, in human suffering and in the falling off of standards which war would bring, such short cuts to man's true nobility are illusory.

War is the greatest of misfortunes for civilised man, and active,

intense opposition to war as a solution of human problems has been for many years the very basis of our policy. Against war we struggle all the time and everywhere—though we adapt the form of our struggle to concrete circumstances. This explains what has puzzled many foreigners—how we, holding our views, did not take advantage of the blows dealt to the U.S.S.R. by the Axis Powers in the Second World War, but on the contrary rallied to the support of Stalin and his régime. Ours is not a facile, abstract pacifism; we could neither stand aside from the struggle nor believe that out of the defeat of Stalin's state by Hitler's state good could come. Between two evils it was necessary to distinguish that which was the greater, and, remembering our faith, that the Soviet peoples must create their good society themselves, however long this task might be, we ranged ourselves among the most resolute defenders of the Soviet Union against an alien attempt to shape our fate for us. No alien force, from wherever it may come and whatever its motives, can do this for us. From outside we ask only moral support and human understanding. In our own country, we ourselves, whatever the difficulties, will in the end find the way.

PURGE

LEARNING ENGLISH, I find that for the Russian word *chistka* as used by the Comsomol and the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R., either of two English words are used—*purge* or *screening*. The attitude revealed by this usage is very different from that of the Soviet régime. When the process is held to be carried out rightly, English takes a word from such actions as, say, the riddling of gravel, when stones up to a certain size pass the riddle and the rest are rejected. But when the process is carried out wrongly, English has recourse to a radical method of cleansing the human body of waste. But the process of sorting out employed in the Soviet Union, though far more rigorous and violent than any screening or purging, is not associated with extreme action by the Russian word *chistka*, which is merely the ordinary Russian word for cleaning; for instance, cleaning of teeth—*chistka zubov*, cleaning of shoes—*chistka sapogov*, cleaning of streets—*chistka ulits*, and there is nothing whatever sinister about the root of the word; *chisty* is the ordinary adjective for clean and *chistota* the ordinary word for cleanliness. This use of the most ordinary word for the most extraordinary process serves to indicate how normal a part of Soviet life the *purge* has become; it is held to be, not something resorted to as an extreme measure—not a purging—but a normal everyday action such as cleaning one's teeth.

This process is applied to institutions and persons alike. One talks of "cleaning" the Party, or the Army, or the Academy, or Ivanov, or Kazansky or Tokaev with equal ease. The process consists of passing the millions of Tokaevs through a screen made of other human souls and thereby sifting out what needs to be cleaned away—"Enemies of the People" or tendencies to become Enemies of the People, "Dangerous Thoughts", as the slightest disagreement with the Kremlin is considered.

* * * * *

On 29th April, 1933, the Moscow Press came out with a decision of the Central Committee and the Supervisory Board of the

Communist Party that the *Whole Party* was to be "cleaned". Soon afterwards instructions on how this was to be done appeared in the newspapers and on notice boards inside institutions, and detailed schemes were also handed out. The Zhukovsky Academy became the object of the particular attention of the Central Committee and of the Supreme Political Administration of the Armed Forces. It was, so it appeared, considered to be a hot-bed of "Right-wing Opportunism".

In official publications the basic aim of the Party purge (to call it by its usual English name) was indicated as: (1) to unmask, expel from the Party and repress all former and present oppositionists; (2) to purge the Party of inactive members and increase the Party's political monolithicity; (3) to check the life history and present circumstances of every member or candidate in order to elucidate the degree of his social conformity with the requirements of the Party's statutes; (4) to check what each single Party member was doing for the general Party line; (5) to throw light on the ideological and political loyalty of every member and candidate towards the Central Committee of the Party, the Central Committee of the Comsomol and the Secretary-General. (Cf., among other sources, the Party decision dated 28th April, 1933, the Political Administration of the Armed Forces' instructions concerning the purge of all branches of the Army and the speech of Rudzutak, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Comsomol at the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party in 1934.)

The principal initiators of the 1933 purge were Stalin and Kirov, and of the two Kirov was the more responsible. He had already tried out purging in his own sphere in Leningrad. Indeed, that is what cost him his life. I have good reason to put on record that it was not in 1934, as the official Kremlin reports of the trial of the so-called "Leningrad Centre" suggest, but in the spring of 1933 that his assassination was first mooted, and that by men who should have known better. Personal detestation had blinded them to the lessons of history; they were sick to death of the incessant carping criticism, the ruthless terrorism and suppression of the freedom of thought by Kirov, and the news that the Party had decided to carry out a *chistka* on a nation-wide scale made them finally lose their patience.

The first thing that outraged us in the Zhukovsky Academy was that this mass enquiry was to be conducted by utter strangers. A Commission of five high level Party officials appeared at the Academy; its members sat in at our lectures, delved into the archives, combed through all personal dossiers, visited the hostels and put

provocative questions to us individually. They held discussions with Party branch officers and those in charge of the various Faculties, year groups, study groups and laboratories. The purpose of all this was merely to survey the field and find out which of the members and candidates merited more particular investigation. They also obtained confidential information regarding us from the Cadres Department, the Garrison Party Commission and the Special Department of the NKVD, while further enquiries were made at the centres where we had previously worked.

The feeling of being studied without any possibility of knowing whether one had come under suspicion produced a sense of uncertainty which pervaded all our work. Everybody lived under a cloud.

And all this time Party branches were themselves preparing material for the purge, every Party Bureau drawing up Party-political "characterisations" or intimate descriptions of the make-up of every man. Simultaneously, the administrative offices prepared service characterisations, while we ourselves, when directed to do so by the Commission, filled in enquiry forms which contained some seventy-five questions covering every facet of our lives down to remote details about our ancestors. Finally, we each of us had to supply a life history; it made no difference if one had had to do this only a few weeks previously; the form had to be filled in yet again, and this had to be done from memory, with no access to anything one had written about oneself before.

All this "evidence" converged on the Commission, and was entered into a "personal purge file", so that the Commission should have all official data in advance of the purge. Thus, two or three weeks before my purge came, the Secretary of the Party Commission—not the special Purge Commission, but the standing body at the Academy—summoned me and the following conversation took place.

SECRETARY: "Comrade Tokaev, I have sent for you to enquire what preparations you are making for the Party purge."

MYSELF: "Kindly tell me what interests you in particular."

SECRETARY: "Don't you think that in the enquiry form you have filled in and in the life history now in your personal file there is something which needs correcting?"

MYSELF: "No, I do not think so, Comrade Secretary. Everything in my personal file is absolutely correct."

SECRETARY: "Are you quite sure of that?"

MYSELF: "I am. Why do you ask?"

SECRETARY: "Because before a Party purge a Bolshevik is obliged to be sincere and play fair with the Party."

MYSELF: "One should speak the truth always. And I *am* speaking the truth."

SECRETARY: "Indeed!"

He leaned back and settled himself in his chair. "Now I happen to have a piece of paper which makes it evident that you have deceived the Party. Your father—was he a White Guard or not?" Why I did not use my fist on him there and then I do not know. "Yes or no?" he insisted, "why is there not a word about this in your life history?" "For the same reason," I replied, "that I did not bother to put in anything about idiots in official positions. And kindly take note," I added, "that your insulting suggestion regarding my father shall not be left without due attention. You will answer for it."

Taking no notice of his cry of astonishment and anger I left him and went straight to the principal Commissar, Indrikson. But Indrikson was away.

I found that he had been appointed to a Purge Commission in another Military Institution and I could not get at him. Friends suggested an appeal to Ordzhonikidze. It was not easy to get an appointment with a People's Commissar, but in the end I did, and I told him what had happened. Ordzhonikidze, however, took a rather grave view of my situation—only two years in the Party and so many clashes with authority. "What is the real reason for all this?" he asked. "For I can tell you that if you go on at this rate Kalinin himself (then President of the U.S.S.R.) couldn't get you out of the mud. You don't agree with the Party line, is that it?"

I was impulsive and sincere and I trusted Ordzhonikidze. "As a matter of fact," I said, "there are things in the Party line with which I do not agree." I felt at that moment as if I had a priceless vase in my hands and were walking on a polished floor. For the man to whom I had said this was no less than a member of the Politbureau, and I had no precise knowledge of his own attitude.

With a sarcastic smile he mimicked me. "Perhaps there are one or two things with which I too do not agree. But that doesn't mean that you have to go scrapping about it. No, you will have to get on to a different footing with the Party."

After Ordzhonikidze's death in 1947, I had occasion to talk of him with many of his immediate juniors, and I realised that there were indeed things with which he did not agree.

"You say you find it hard?" he went on, "do you think I find it

easy? Who finds things easy today? But it's no use whining. You are still young and it's a bit early for you to fling your weight about. As for slanderers and scoundrels, better turn a blind eye. We'll find means of dealing with them."

A moment later, he called in the head of his secretariat and ordered him to put him through immediately to Gamarnik. (Gamarnik was the First Deputy to the People's Commissar of Defence and headed the Supreme Political Administration of the Armed Forces. In 1937, on the point of being arrested, he committed suicide.) Gamarnik, however, was not available, and Ordzhonikidze spoke to G. A. Osepyan, an Army Commissar of the second rank.

The very next day I was summoned to Indrikson's room, and there was Indrikson together with Osepyan. Osepyan was a striking figure, a tall swarthy handsome Armenian with a mass of jet black hair. He was a careless conqueror of women's hearts, and people whispered that he would have been more in his place on the stage than in the army. In private life he never did seem like an army man, but sang songs and told endless funny stories. However, the patience and vigour with which he acted in my case made a deep impression on me.

We had a talk which lasted at least an hour, and there was no hint in it of Osepyan's vastly superior rank. He talked to me quietly and reasonably. He would not say that I was fully in the right, or the Party Commission's Secretary fully in the wrong. Of course, it was stupid of him to level such an accusation against my father; but I should not behave as if my slate were perfectly clean. And why had I gone running to a People's Commissar, taking up his time and going over the heads of people whose business it was to handle such matters—Indrikson and himself?

He did indeed make me feel heartily ashamed of myself, but he was never harsh with me and I know that he took immediate steps on my behalf.

I was to see him again two years later in 1935, when, after the assassination of Kirov, I had to face an enquiry commission of which he was a member; I shall never forget the urgent note he sent down to me: "Calmly, calmly, Comrade Tokaev, there are occasions when the best specific is calm." He had still the same patience and humanity, and he never changed until his final disappearance from the Soviet scene.

After he had left Indrikson too reproached me. I had foolishly injured the best of men, but he forgave me and went on to give me good advice, not as a senior officer but, as he put it, as an older

comrade. I was to cease acting as though I were all alone. The way I was going I would be off the stage very soon, without having been of any use to anyone. "You were born at the wrong time, Comrade Tokaev; you are too straight, too frank, and this will make life very hard for you. You must grasp one simple truth: the Party is not to be argued with. The Party does not suffer a man to belong to it by half, it requires absolute loyalty. Whether you like it or not, my advice to you is to lie low during the purge and to remember that you belong to the Party, not the Party to you."

How like Ordzhonikidze's his advice was! I felt as if I were gripped in a huge press. Here, in a nutshell, was the full horror of our position.

But I took myself in hand, and was certainly quieter at the purge than I might otherwise have been. The intervention of the big bosses had its effect on the course of the enquiry; those responsible for the allegation against my father were punished, and I came through with a more tranquil mind.

And what exactly was the purge? Firstly, it was a public inquisition, with every Party member in attendance and their families and friends invited for edification; outsiders too could be present, much as in other countries people attend a murder trial.

"Comrades," declared the Chairman of the Commission, "today we shall purge Party members Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, Naum Mikhaylovich Kazansky, Grigory Alexandrovich Tokaev . . ." and so on.

The Secretary of the rank and file branch of the persons to be "cleaned" was then called upon to speak. He gave a brief characterisation on the following lines (I reconstitute a case from memory): "Kazansky, Naum Mikhaylovich, Jew by nationality, born in 1900, Party member since 1918. Community status—civilian employment . . ." He then went on to describe the man's career. "Social origin—son of a tradesman, did not take part in the October Revolution, was not a member of the Menshevik Party, did not vote for the Trotskyist Resolutions, never sympathised with the Zinovyev Opposition, has not been mixed up in Right-wing Opportunism; present occupation—head of the Chair of Political Economy at the Academy, with rank of Divisional Commissar (P-7) . . ."

Next came the turn of Kazansky himself, and he too related his life history in great detail, for he must not leave one unlit patch, however complicated his life has been. All of this was heard with the deepest attention, while the members of the Committee checked the details in Kazansky's personal dossier, which was open before them.

When Kazansky had completed his story, he remained at the tribune to await questions. These were bound to come, for when the Chairman offered those present the opportunity of questioning, this was tantamount to an instruction to ask questions. The questions were of the most varied kind. Do you quarrel with your wife? Do you drink? Are you a smoker? On what do you choose to spend your money? Are you loyal to the Party of Lenin and Stalin? When were you married? What was your wife's father? What did your paternal grandfather do for a living? What is the ultimate aim of the Communist Revolution? What is your attitude towards Trotskyism? Who and what is Harry Pollitt? Why do the labouring masses of the United States live in poverty and terror? Whom do you consider the most brilliant Leader in the world? What is the name of your wife's sister?

In Kazansky's case there was suddenly a question which appeared innocent enough, even rather silly. A young man in a Lieutenant's uniform raised his hand and asked: "Comrade Kazansky, what do you call your son?" To everybody's astonishment, this clearly disconcerted Kazansky. At the least sign of hesitation in making an answer, the Purge Commission pricks up its ears. The Chairman repeated the question. "My son's name," Kazansky answered, haltingly, "is Ledit." There was no time for Kazansky to think or to invent.

Certainly an unusual name. The Lieutenant instantly followed up with a knock-out blow. "Comrades," he cried, in the style which was to become customary, "in the person of Kazansky we have a concealed enemy of the Party and the people, a Trotskyist, a masked enemy. Kazansky has concealed from the Party his Trotskyist past and his Trotskyist present, but he has left a clue in the name which in an unguarded moment he gave his son. For Ledit is a made-up name, a symbolic name, it stands for *Lev Davidovich Trotsky*! As you see, this concealed enemy made of his son a monument to the *Ataman* of International Counter-Revolution. At that tribune stands a Trotsky abortion, who has used his Party card as a fig-leaf to conceal his Counter-Revolutionary nakedness. He must be expelled from the Party! He must be driven from our midst! Down with him!"

I remember many of us stared with amazement, unable to believe our eyes or ears. For Kazansky had been famous not only for the breadth of his learning but for the precision of his definitions, a Bolshevik of the purest water, and this exposure was completely unexpected. The emotion in the hall grew, as one man after another

hastened to follow the suit of the Lieutenant who had spoken first. Seeing Kazansky was already condemned—and indeed Kazansky said nothing and stood there like a broken man—they found it wisest to attack him. His silence might well be a confession of his guilt; in any case, it was clear that his fate was sealed, and only for the most powerful reasons could his position be restored to him.

A week later, Belinsky and I came upon him at the entrance to the Passes Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party. The former senior commissar's struggle to rehabilitate himself had begun. He was out of uniform and had visibly grown thinner. I asked him how things stood, but he did not answer me. With tears in his eyes, he merely turned aside and went his way. Some time later I saw him once in the street, a miserable outcast, even his boots uncleaned. After the assassination of Kirov he was one of the many who were arrested; since then nothing has been seen of him.

My own case followed that of Kazansky, and it is interesting for the part played at such enquiries by the preliminary support of higher level personnel. An attack was made by Gavryukov, who was no friend of mine: "How many times have you been expelled from the Party?" But the reply came from the Chairman of the Commission. "We already know all about that!" he said.

Gavryukov insisted. "Have you taken any part in any of the Oppositions?" he demanded.¹

I made no answer. The Chairman repeated the question, and said: "Why do you not reply? You must make some answer."

I said: "In the past two years that same question has been put to me at official enquiries no less than ten times, and I have answered it ten times. If necessary, I can repeat that answer an eleventh time: I have not been either a Trotskyist, nor a Zinovyevist, nor a Bukharinist, nor a Riutinist, nor do I propose to be. And I request this Purge Commission to protect me in future from a question of which I have grown heartily sick."

This was a very outspoken way for me to bear myself, but my statement was factually true, and there had been no precise question about any other form of opposition. Several other questions were

¹ Here it is in the nature of the Russian language to be ambiguous since it lacks the precise machinery of the English indefinite article, definite article, or absence of any article. The question could equally mean "Have you taken part in *any* opposition movement?" and no doubt this is what Gavryukov intended. The author, however, chose to understand it in the more limited sense and replied accordingly. Trans.

asked—they were mostly trifling—and once again the Chairman reminded the Assembly that I had only recently passed through an Enquiry, so there was little point in wasting time on small matters.

After the questions came the speeches. One of my colleagues, Talalay, said that at lectures on foreign languages and philosophy I “terrorised” the lecturers, Rebrov and Shershnyov; by this he meant my provocative questions. Another, named Kim, who later became a “hero” of the Korean War, gave it as his opinion that I should be compelled to put an end to my “Civilian Democratism”. There were other speakers too, but not one suggestion that I should be expelled. I had been rehabilitated too recently, and the intervention from on top had been too pronounced.

Two speeches were made in my favour, one by an old and faithful friend, Koshelyov, a civilian Party member, who spoke passionately in my favour, and the other by Ochkasov, a student of the Baumann Moscow Higher Technical College who had come specially to defend me.

Thus I got through the Purge, if not with my hair unruffled, at least without a bruise. The Commission, it is true, prescribed certain advice and warnings, and I, of course, promised to take due note of them. Unfortunately, my relations with the Party still did not improve—I say “unfortunately” because I was not always right in what I did, and I was far from being wise in my tactics even when my stand was right.

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The Air Force Command had been recommended to transfer me from the Exploitation Faculty to the Aeronautical Engineering Faculty of the Academy. The purpose of this was to remove me from direct contact with Zhuravlyov and his fanatics, and also to remove me from the temptation to interest myself too forcibly in political questions; it was thought that the amount of physics and mathematics I would have to study would keep me fully occupied. So it did; nevertheless, I soon became involved in a clash with the Shershnyov whom, at my purge, I had been accused of “terrorising”.

Shershnyov was a man of great academic qualifications. He had graduated at the Institute of Red Professors; on his breast was the Order of the Red Banner; he was a “hero” of the Civil War. He was, however, also a fervent pro-Stalinist, and this prompted him to use his knowledge for agitation rather than for education or propaganda

and to preach distortions of Marxism-Leninism to justify the Stalinist line.

The distortion on which I seized was the assertion made by Shershnyov, in common with other philosophers of the Stalinist School, that because the social order of the U.S.S.R. was a Dictatorship of the Proletariat, it was, as such, a higher form of democracy. Now neither Marx nor Engels nor Lenin, *nor even Stalin*, had ever suggested that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was any form of democracy at all, and I interrupted one of Shershnyov's lectures to point this out. I was well armed with quotations, to show that Shershnyov was out-running the leaders of the Party and giving a false interpretation of generally accepted views. Actually, Shershnyov's lecture was merely a standard example of the propaganda by which the oligarchy was beginning to justify its deliberate divorce from the people and from democracy. This indeed was the point of my attack, and I counted on my words producing some effect on the crowded auditorium.

The matter is of some importance, and before proceeding with the account of what happened to me, it may be well to indicate the main points at issue. In their *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels proclaimed that the history of human society is the story of the struggle of classes, and that contemporary history is the story of the conflict between the forces of production and productive relationships; for side by side with the bourgeoisie there grows up the proletariat which is the gravedigger of the bourgeoisie. As it becomes the most revolutionary class the proletariat must establish its political dominance by forcibly overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Once it has become the ruling class the proletariat must make use of its political dominance to expropriate the capital of the bourgeoisie and concentrate all means of production in the hands of the proletarian State.

Thus wrote Marx and Engels; thus thought Lenin, and herein is the kernel of revolutionary Marxism. There is plainly not the slightest suggestion in their writings that this stage of social development is a higher form of democracy, nor even that it is any kind of democracy, any Government by the nation as a whole. Where there is class dominance it is as seemly to speak of democracy as it is to discuss hempen ropes in the home of a man who has recently been hanged.

The question arises whether perhaps Lenin and Stalin "supplemented" Marxism by more democratic concepts. Not in the least, they went even further and spoke openly of direct dictatorship.

"The dictatorship of the Proletariat," wrote Lenin (Vol. XXIV of his *Works* in the Russian edition, p. 311), "is the class struggle of the victorious proletariat which has taken into its hands political power over the conquered, though not yet destroyed, bourgeois class; this class continues to offer resistance and strives to increase its opposition." And elsewhere (Vol. XXVI, p. 286), he wrote: "That class which has taken political dominance into its own hands, has done so with a clear realisation of what it has done. This indeed is an integral part of the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. That concept only makes sense when one class knows that it alone is assuming political power without any self-deception or attempts to deceive others with talk about being 'all-national' or 'based on universal suffrage', or 'sanctioned by the whole nation'."

There can be no question but that Lenin was very far indeed from considering the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as having any connection whatever with democracy.

It is sometimes argued that class dominance is a democracy of a kind, in so far as it is the rule of the whole of the working class: in other words, democracy for one class. In practice even this is not true. There would only be a class democracy of this kind in the U.S.S.R. if there existed a genuine Dictatorship of the Proletariat; if the proletarian masses genuinely ruled, or at least if the Kremlin group ruling in the name of these masses, were their true representatives, elected on genuinely democratic lines and responsible to their electors. In reality, in the U.S.S.R. there is neither democracy nor even class dominance. There is quite plainly dominance by an oligarchy standing above class, a dictatorship dependent upon nothing but its own power.

Let us see what Stalin himself has to say about it. In *Questions of Leninism* he says: "Not a single important decision of the mass organisations of the proletariat comes into being without governing directions from the Party, not a single important political or organisational matter in our country is decided by the Soviet or other mass organisations without governing directions from the Party, and in this sense the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is in essence the dictatorship of the Party, as the basic governing force of the proletariat. . . . The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is constituted by the governing directives of the Party plus their translation into life by the population." (*Questions of Leninism*, 1926, 11th Russian edition, pp. 112-3.) Note how Stalin, usually so sparing of words, here repeats himself; he certainly meant every syllable of what he wrote.

This in fact was my principal broadside against Shershnyov. Nevertheless, he persisted in his talk about a higher form of democracy, and since that time the newer fanatics of the Central Committee have taken up the cry. Yet who in this discussion was misrepresenting Lenin and Stalin—I or Shershnyov? Nevertheless, Shershnyov accused me publicly of Trotskyism and, since he had the authority of his position behind him, the matter duly came to the notice of the Political Department.

Both Shershnyov and I were summoned before the Head of the Department of Marxism-Leninism, Corps-Commissar Rusanov (rank P-9). Rusanov was an old Bolshevik who had been in the Party since pre-revolutionary days; incidentally, he had at one time worked in the Administration of the North Caucasian Military District, and for this reason liked to call himself jokingly my "fellow countryman". He had a quiet sensible way of talking; a man of no transcendent brilliance, he had average intelligence coupled with great practical experience, and from his lips I now received a lesson rather like the one which Indrikson had given me. Tall, with a prominent belly and eyes peering from under bushy, bristled brows, he spoke to me more like a parson than a Commissar. Quite clearly, he knew that his assistant, Shershnyov, was propagating nonsense because those were his orders, and so he did not blame him. He also saw that in my youth and inexperience I was inclined to take the words of the masters at their face value, and so he did not blame me either. In fact, he was a great opportunist and peace-maker.

Quietly, he explained to me what he thought politics were—not merely the expression of the basic interests of the State, but also the means by which the mutual relations between citizens are harmonised. Politics which worked against friendly mutual relations could not be good or proper politics, and vice versa. This meant that if Shershnyov and I turned politics into cudgels to beat each other with, and that in front of hundreds of students, ours were poor politics. "And in future my advice to you is to find other means of thrashing things out. Drop in here, sit down at this table, each with a clean sheet of paper in front of you and work out your ideas, and debate and argue to your hearts' content. That would be useful. In fact, that is a form of higher democracy. Whereas these envenomed attacks in public only drive you further apart."

I was aglow with enthusiasm at hearing such wisdom from one of the biggest Commissars of the Red Army, for this was really my own ideal of how things should be done. Indeed, could we be allowed

freedom of discussion and political parties in the Soviet Union, I should immediately hasten back there. But I am afraid this is a very distant dream, for freedom of debate would mean the end of the Stalinist State, and such a change cannot be brought about overnight.

STALIN'S BLOW AGAINST THE RIGHT

IF IT IS HARD to achieve a balanced and fair view of the Soviet Union from the outside, it is perhaps even more difficult for such a product of it as myself to present a balanced picture of it from the inside.

The very existence of such moderate and reasonable men as Rusanov in such high-up positions shows the absurdity of the myth that the higher Soviet officialdom is a monolithic body of fanatical Stalinists. But one should not for this reason fall into the opposite error of thinking that after all "things are not so bad". For thirty-six years the machine has been at work on the rising generations and it has produced abundant results: it has resulted both in the Stalinist mentality of vast numbers of individuals and in that monolithic appearance of the structure which should neither be taken at its face value nor discounted as wholly illusory.

Another error is to imagine that all the evils of the system are due only to some one part of it—such as the MVD. It is understandable that those who have spent many years in Soviet prisons should see the hand of the MVD everywhere and give the impression to others that its removal would bring about a magical change. This is only a half truth. In reality the reign of terror is more widespread than the sphere of activity of the MVD. At the same time it is less absolute, less powerful and less universal than some of its victims very naturally believe.

To give some examples of what I mean—the hand of the NKVD was far less noticeable at the Zhukovsky Academy than it would be inside a prison; but there were other methods of intimidation which were just as unpleasant. The MVD rarely visit remote villages, and then not necessarily on important business; yet over the whole countryside hangs the indefinable *fear* of the MVD. At the same time it would be quite false to imagine that the whole population of the U.S.S.R. is paralysed by fear of direct methods of repression. There are many thousands of people who are constantly opposing the Stalinist line; there are hundreds who are constantly plotting against the régime; there are even groups who plan terrorist acts against the leaders in the Kremlin; and in the last World War the

Cheshen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, almost to a man, raised the standard of the struggle for its own independence.

Nor is it true, as some "experts" say, that every Soviet citizen has a spy at his elbow. If it were, it would mean that the whole country is made up of spies, and a more foolish and unfounded slander could not be imagined.

The main trouble with all such exaggerations is that they play directly into the hands of the Kremlin. It is indeed one of the aims of the oligarchy to puff itself out so large that everybody, everywhere, should believe it to be irresistible. It is in the interests of the police services that individual citizens and public opinion generally should believe the MVD to be omnipresent, infinitely strong, undetectable and unbreakable. I could give many examples of rumours started deliberately with the object of creating uncertainty and an impalpable sense of doom. It is precisely *uncertainty* that is aimed at: not that people should think "I am about to be arrested", but "I *may* be about to be arrested", that they should *never be sure* what is the police services' next move.

A known enemy is easy to fight; what is harder to struggle against is the incalculable; and if I had any message for those who direct political warfare in the West, I would say: Find the means of removing that sense of indefinable menace, that feeling of the unknown, the incalculable. That is the only assistance that true revolutionary democrats in the Soviet Union should ask from outside; the rest we can and must do ourselves.

One of the main objects of a public *lynching* such as that of Kazansky is precisely to destroy the self-confidence of the man in the street. (Note that that lynching was not the work of the NKVD.) The aim is not primarily to destroy the Kazanskys, but to make the ordinary folk—the Ivanovs, the Smiths, Jones and Robertsons—tote the Party line without departing from it even in so far as to call their children by eccentric names. The policy is not only to send the Ivanovs to Siberia, but to avoid having to send them there by making them be present at such scenes as the purging of Kazansky—which make them behave as though they were on the point of being sent to Siberia.

One method of pressure is terror through such examples; the other is the constant pressure of Soviet political education, i.e., of propaganda. I have recently read in a Western newspaper that nobody in the Soviet Union believes what Soviet propaganda says. This is quite untrue. Soviet propaganda as a means of mass hypnosis is probably the most efficient system of propaganda in the world.

It may not be uninteresting to glance at its method of working. The first thing that strikes one is the degree to which it is centralised. Without exception, all the personnel involved and all the technical devices are under the control of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda; this is an organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, headed by one of its Secretaries, i.e., by an immediate deputy of the First Secretary himself. The present head of the Agitprop is Pospelov. His rôle may be compared to that of a key mechanic in a vast electrical power station: press the right button and all the networks go into simultaneous operation—newspapers, radio, magazines, books, theatre, cinema, exhibitions, even museums. All of them keep time, playing exactly the same tune.

Certain basic principles guide all Soviet propaganda work. One of these is persistence. It is assumed that if the propagandists are sufficiently persistent, anybody can get used to anything—or at least can be made to accept any given assertion. The first time the assertion is made the effect may be unpleasant, but with sufficient persistence the initial shock wears off, and the thing asserted comes almost to be taken for granted. Another principle is multiplication: never use one word where more could be used; a laconic statement might pass unnoticed, but if an idea is repeated a thousand times it will at least once make its mark. Hence the rule to ram things home, to repeat, over and over again, endlessly. Thirdly, it is fully admitted that all propaganda meets with some mass resistance. The statement that a thing is excellent suggests only that it may be good, good suggests fair, and fair suggests bad. Thus the assertion that the peoples of the Western world are dying of starvation produces the belief that there is something wrong with their food supplies—or at least that they are no better off than the peoples of the Soviet world: in other words, the assertion achieves its real aim.

The real task of Soviet propaganda has been to integrate the many millions of an enormous country into one compact organism. Particularly since 1934 the Soviet régime has indeed succeeded in transforming these many millions into a single body in which the slightest local development of individuality is felt as sharply as an arthritic joint. A great political army has been created, with its army regulations, its standards of conduct, its mass-produced universal ethics. Despite the fact that in all ranks there are people of the resistance, it is still an army, and anyone who marches out of step is all the easier to bring to book.

Just as we have all learned to perform certain physical functions

every day, so the Soviet man has learned to conform his social behaviour to certain universally established patterns.

A uniformity of "polite" behaviour unknown in Tsarist days has been achieved by the Stalinist system of propaganda. The establishment of such universally recognised norms of behaviour which have an unvarying political content is a great achievement. It may be compared to a thorough and deep cultivation of the soil, on the basis of which so much more of the desired crop can be grown.

* * * * *

Later on I was put in charge of a Marxist-Leninist Workers' Evening School in the 94th District of the Administration of Military Constructional Works of the People's Commissariat of Defence. The classes were held in a room in some filthy hutments used as dwellings. They were situated on the Leningrad Chaussée opposite the civilian airport. The pupils were ordinary workers, men and women. One day, I remember, I took one of the girls out to the theatre.

Larissa was born down the Volga, she was charming and pretty, a Comsomol member and twenty-two. We heard *Carmen* at the Bolshoy. After the show I saw her home. We walked. On the way, in Gorky Street, I asked her if she had been working long in Moscow.

"It will soon be two years," she said.

"You're having a hard time?"

"Of course it's a hard time. But we are constructing socialism."

"And that is making things easier for you?"

She gave a little snort and a laugh. "Of course it doesn't make the work any easier," she said, rather scornfully, "but it makes one happier at heart. And when you're happier at heart, the actual work is easier too."

"But aren't you tired of living in this stinking hut?" I asked her later on, "a clever, pretty, grown-up girl like you, living in a hut with no kitchen, no inside convenience, no water even, no comfort at all?"

"Why ever should I be tired of it?" she cried, with the appearance of being genuinely surprised by my question. "How am I different from anybody else? Do I need more than other people? Why, in capitalist countries I shouldn't even have a hut like this."

This she said with the utmost conviction and simplicity, completely unconscious that she was repeating or spreading her master's propaganda. We turned to talking of earnings. Were her wages enough? Of course, she said, she needed a lot of things, but she was not a middle-class girl with middle-class views who would think only of her own bodily comfort and possessions when the Party and Govern-

ment were busy constructing socialism. Of course, it would be nice to have more, but "the Party and the Government know how much they can afford".

Think deeply over Larissa, for this was no politically-minded activist, though she was in the Comsomol. She was a very ordinary young girl, with all an ordinary young girl's dreams and desires and demands. Her answers were made automatically, merely an example of Soviet good manners, of conformity to social norms which were beyond question. There are many millions of such people, who are not politically-minded, yet are thoroughly indoctrinated in this way, and this is one of the most troublesome obstacles to progress.

In the same hutments as Larissa lived a worker named Saifuddinov. He was a Tartar, or perhaps a Chuvash, I don't exactly know, a hearty fellow, full of vigour, who always had precise, ready answers when questioned at the evening school. He was dressed like a beggar and was altogether a pitiful sight, and I resolved to try to make him think about his miserable status. He only needed to glance at his own feet to appraise Stalinism at its real value. But to my surprise, instead of drawing the conclusions I had hoped, he drew conclusions of the opposite order; he reminded me that we had just completed the First Five Year Plan and were now on our way at full speed towards a happy, joyful life; we were creating mammoth industrial plants, we were setting up tractor stations in collective farms, we were increasing productivity, we were growing, we were flourishing—whereas in the countries of capitalism everything was going quickly downhill, the workers were starving and subjected to arbitrary rule.

"Comrade Saifuddinov," I remember asking him during a class, "will you please take yourself as an example to illustrate the improvement in the material and domestic conditions of the working class of the U.S.S.R."

"What is the point of taking an individual example, Comrade Instructor," he replied at once. "I was speaking of the improvement of conditions all round, as a whole. Like that, there is a steady improvement. Individual cases have nothing to do with it."

"All the same," I asked, "has your personal position improved?"

"Of course it is improving! Are we not building an underground railway in Moscow? Are we not building the Moscow Volga Canal? Of course we are, and we are building up Socialism, aren't we?"

Such were the conditions among which we worked. We felt ourselves fettered hand and foot by the extraordinary submissiveness of the mass of the population.

If this was the position among ordinary people, what was the outlook in the Party ranks? Is the Soviet Communist Party through and through conditioned to the same degree of automatism, or have the leading Party officials their feet on the ground, in reality?

I can at least answer for myself. I spent two years in the Pioneers, six years in the Comsomol, sixteen years in the Party. For fifteen years I belonged to the Corps of Officers of the armed forces, for ten of them I was a leading Party member and a senior reader of a Moscow Academy of the highest rank. With this experience behind me I feel safe in saying that the general reaction of the Party member is one of extreme uncertainty. There is not one of them in a position of responsibility—and this includes the members of the Praesidium—who feels the ground safe beneath his feet. There is not one who is sure what tomorrow may bring him. There is not one section of the ruling caste which has not gone through purges. I do not know one single organ of State or Party authority, members of which have not been summarily arrested and shot. Singly, or in small groups, they systematically disappear. Of course, never all from any one office at the same time. The sense of insecurity of the Party man is far greater than that of the non-Party man. This it is, indeed, that gives rise to the frenzied efforts made by everyone to express loyalty as demonstratively as possible.

* * * * *

This was shown with extraordinary vividness at the 17th Party Congress held from 26th January to 10th February, 1934. It was a great turning point in the history of world Communism for it was the end of *all* inner-Party overt opposition. It was the watershed between the steady deformation of Lenin and Trotsky's revolutionary *dictatorship* and the counter-revolutionary *despotism* of Stalin, Molotov and Kirov. It was, in the main, a Congress of Stalin's counter-revolutionary disciples, a Congress called for the deification of Stalin, for the elevation of one person above the community and the destruction of the last remnants of human individuality.

I attended the Congress as a visitor. I recall how Postyshev, the Chairman, called on Bukharin to speak, and how Stalin stared at Bukharin with parted lips as if wondering what he would say. There was faint applause; the greatest theoretician of Bolshevism got only a cool reception, while nonentities like Molotov and Yezhov were given great ovations. This in itself was evidence that the whole thing was a counter-revolutionary farce.

All the outstanding oppositionists were prevailed upon to

attend. Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, Preobrazhensky, Lominadze, Kamenev—all were there. They had been painstakingly worked upon beforehand—"processed". They were all compelled to pronounce loyal speeches of praise for Stalin. Karl Radek told his own circle, on the eve of the Congress, that in spite of the processing to which he had been subjected, he would stand up against the deification of Stalin, but at the Congress he yielded to the general psychosis and turned traitor. "From now on," he said, "not only may those in opposition not dream of struggling against the achievements of our Party under the wise leadership of Comrade Stalin, but it is their duty to be in the front ranks of those who support it and, by their disciplined implementation of the Party line, to show their loyalty to Comrade Stalin; anyone who has opposed the Party must ask himself on which side of the barricade he stands; he who is not with the Party is against the Party, against Stalin—there can be no centre position; let everybody be aware that there is no other fight for the cause of the working class but that led by our Party under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Comrade Stalin; let all be clear that any attempt at even a shadow of opposition to the Party is equivalent to crossing to the side of the vanguard of counter-revolution." (Cf. *Minutes of the 17th Congress*, proceeding of 8th February, 1934, p. 628, Russian edition.)

It is difficult to put into words the pain which this unexpected declaration caused us. This was the man whom we had regarded as a consistent oppositionist. According to him now, we were in the front ranks of the counter-revolution!

Still worse blows to the opposition were dealt by Zinovyev, a man who had been twice or thrice already in exile and who had recently dubbed Stalin "a traitor to the cause of Lenin". Here was Zinovyev whose slavish conduct later enabled the Stalinists to catch hundreds, if not thousands, of brave oppositionists, the Zinovyev of whom since then no normal anti-Stalinist can think without scorn and loathing. Why, it was only two months earlier that, shaking his clenched fists before his face, he had preached to others on the vital need to struggle with courage against Stalin, Molotov and Kirov, and here he was, a pitiable sight, all fear and trembling, doing his very utmost to please the master. "Comrades," he said, "if I have decided to mount the tribune of the 17th Congress of the Party—this world tribune in the truest sense, the tribune of the world proletariat—and if the Comrades have allowed me to do so, I trust it is because I have ended completely, utterly, with the anti-Party period of my life, the period of my alienation from the Party in which I spent

many years. I have, as I trust and believe, understood to the full and to the utmost the tremendous errors I have made. I actually had the arrogance to try to foist my own particular view of Leninism on the Party, my own particular understanding of what I call the philosophy of the period. . . . However, I now see that this was a chain of errors, and that had the Party not shown due resistance to these errors, we would have brought the country to the very edge of catastrophe and destruction. . . ." This renegade then proceeded to glorify his enemy Stalin: "When I read deeply into Comrade Stalin's report and think deeply over it, when I compare the power of this rare—most rare—document with other documents in the history of world Communism, I perceive the rightness of the road that Comrade Stalin has chosen. . . . Comrade Stalin's report is among those few, those extremely rare works, which on every reading are found to have a new wealth of content . . . the best among the advanced collective farm peasantry are streaming to Moscow to the Kremlin, to set eyes on Comrade Stalin, to see him, even to feel him with their hands; they are streaming here to receive from his own lips the directives which they desire to convey to the masses. It is like the picture in the Smolny Institute of those scenes in 1917 and 18, when the best among the peasantry similarly wanted to set eyes on Lenin. Comrades, what countless attacks on Comrade Stalin were made by myself and by other former oppositionists! Comrades, I have understood that this was all the most profound of errors." (*Minutes of the 17th Congress*, p. 496, Russian edition.)

Still worse was the capitulation of Lev Kamenev, one of Lenin's closest associates, a member of the Politbureau and second only to Zinovyev as the leader of the opposition. "While Comrade Stalin," declared Kamenev, "the most deserving of Lenin's pupils, took over his work, and with set teeth, rejecting all hesitation, bore aloft the banner wrenched by death from Lenin's hands, the group to which I belonged immediately gave in, was shaken in its faith, and thereafter stubbornly and insistently tried to force its own erroneous views on the Party. We then started on a course which was bound to bring us to counter-revolution. . . . But the orthodox intolerance and the perspicacious sense of ideals of Comrade Stalin saved both Party and country. From this tribune I wish to declare that I consider the Kamenev who from 1925 to 1933 struggled against the Party and the Party leadership is a political corpse, and that I wish to go forward without dragging its old hide behind me. Long live our—I emphasise *our!*—leader and commander, Comrade Stalin." (*Ibid.*, p. 522.)

Yet another opposition leader, Preobrazhensky, the principal theoretician of the Trotskyists, who in 1927 had organised an anti-Stalin demonstration in Moscow and shouted such slogans as "Long live Trotsky, down with Stalin!", made literally the following declaration from the tribune: "Now that I have sufficiently recognised all my errors, I tell myself: *Vote with Comrade Stalin and you will not be wrong!*" (*Ibid.*, p. 236.)

And Rykov, who had succeeded Lenin as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, and who in 1928, together with Bukharin and Tomsky, had headed the Right-wing Deviation, the one of all the inner-Party deviations which was the most dangerous to Stalin, Rykov mounted the tribune and said: "The rout of the Right-wing Deviation, which was headed by myself and Bukharin, was absolutely essential for the Leninist-Stalinist rallying of the Party. . . . The rout of the Right-wing Deviation, achieved by Comrade Stalin, constitutes a part of the great deed that brought us to those triumphs of which their organiser, the leader of our Party, Comrade Stalin, has given us a survey. . . . After the death of Lenin, Comrade Stalin, immediately and without any delay, stood out as the leader, as an organiser of enormous power . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 211.)

Even Bukharin, the most consistent and stubborn of the oppositionists, actually went so far as to call a toast in honour of the "Glorious Field-Marshal of the forces of the proletariat, the finest among the finest, Comrade Stalin." (*Ibid.*)

There was only one of the principal leaders of the Right-wing Deviation—Alexander Petrovitch Smirnov, an old Bolshevik—who had stood up to the preliminary processing. He alone continued to charge Stalin, Kirov and Molotov with the creation of a "barrack régime, worse than the régime of Nicholas the First". He alone remained true to the end and not only did not capitulate at the Congress of the Reactionaries, but even refused to be present, considering it a Congress of shame, a Congress of renegades and of men deformed by despotism. Even though we do not share his views, it is, in my opinion, our bounden duty to honour the memory of that courageous man, to whom we owe the inspiring words: "Me you can shoot, but you cannot shoot the revolutionary democratic spirit of the peoples of the U.S.S.R."

During the preliminary processing, the Central Committee had succeeded in persuading its principal enemies to commit political suicide and thereby to decimate the ranks of the opposition. It had persuaded them, in fact, to become its best propagandists. It was one thing when Stalin or Kirov declared the Right-wing Deviationists to

be "counter-revolutionaries"—and quite another when Bukharin or Rykov did so. It was one thing if a go-getter like Yezhov, striving to rise from the ranks, cried "long live Stalin!"—but quite another when this was done by Lenin's closest associates, Zinovyev and Kamenev, who, from the tribune of a Party Congress, praised Stalin as "most brilliant", "most rare", "the greatest ever".

This was of the very essence of Stalinist propaganda, and the results were immediate. Panic began first in the ranks of the inner-Party opposition groups, and from there it spread in ever wider ripples throughout the country. Men strove frantically to establish a clean bill of political health. There was a tidal wave of mutual distrust. The considerable "Army" of rank and file Party members who disagreed with Stalin suddenly found itself abandoned by its officers; worse than this, the officers had crossed over to the other side. Declarations of loyalty to Stalin became the order of the day.

And now the Stalin group at last felt themselves secure. They stripped off the velvet glove which for tactical reasons had concealed their iron hand. Hitherto a man's services to the Revolution had been taken into account, hitherto the early traditions of the Party had been maintained at least in part, so far there had been at least a small safety valve of fractional independence within the Party. Now began whole-hearted reaction, what is known in Russian as the Rule of the Black Hundreds.¹

There were no actual gangs of armed hooligans to implement the reaction, but the spirit was the same—abrogation of the rule of law and a hue and cry against anyone opposed to the authoritarian rule of those in power; the least taint of having sympathised with any form of opposition to Stalin was sufficient to endanger a man's position. Thus, by the summer of 1934, the country was overshadowed by the dark clouds of Stalin's new despotism.

* * * * *

I was at the summer Air Force Camp near Serpukhovo, a small town some eighty miles south of Moscow, when one Sunday three of my Moscow comrades came to see me. They were Belinsky, Plekhanov and Karsavina (these are under-cover names), all three civilian students from Moscow colleges. We met outside the town

¹ The term dates characteristically from the Tsarist days when, after the failure of the 1905 Revolution, a group of officials, clergy and landowners founded "The Union of True Russian People", enlisted anyone who liked to take part in the violent suppression of progressive ideas, and organised bands of hooligans—"Black Hundreds"—who attacked "Sedition", that is to say, anything opposed to Tsarist obscurantism.

by the River Oka; it was safer to mix with the bathers and talk while sun-bathing than to go to some obscure place to which one of us might have been followed.

My friends brought messages from our comrades in Leningrad, the centre of the strongest underground movement, urging us to continue the struggle. Our Moscow comrades, however, were pessimistic and inclined to panic; they wished all branches to dissolve at once and wait for "better times".

Here I must make it plain that the people involved in this argument were not many. There were very few of us anywhere. We were members of a movement of young people who belonged neither to the Right- nor the Left-wing deviation, nor to any of the opposition groups known to the Central Committee at that time. Our ideas had grown out of first principles rather than out of the struggle between the Party and the known oppositions. Or perhaps I should rather say that, starting from a variety of points of view, we were still feeling our way towards an agreed policy; we were not yet an opposition, we were the raw material out of which an opposition could be made.

The intensification of Stalin's despotism was a testing ground for us. It helped us to define our views (of which, for good reasons, I can speak only in the most general terms) and it also hardened the differences between some of us. The Leningrad comrades were anxious that we should go on with our work of criticism, which would bring new forces and rally them together; they even wanted us to intensify our work, to hurry—we did not know why at the time.

That Sunday we discussed the recent political events and what should be our attitude towards them. We all agreed in condemning the renegades, principally Zinovyev, Kamenev, Radek, Preobrazhensky and others, though the conduct of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy seemed to us, in the last resort, almost equally treacherous, and we were agreed in our admiration for Smirnov. We also decided that, should we be approached by other opposition groups, we would reply that we had nothing to do with anti-Stalinist activity and were loyal to the Central Committee of the Party. This was an inevitable measure to avoid suspicion on the part of the authorities. It was a decision of despair and an attempt to evade the approaching reign of terror. We knew that it did not do us honour, but there was no other way open to us.

* * * * *

At the end of my period in camp and the beginning of the summer vacation I went to Leningrad to attend an important secret council, but no sooner had I arrived that I received a warning that the council would not take place. There was reason to believe that the security organs were on the alert and had intensified their vigilance. To make my visit seem innocent I spent a few days laying a false trail: I began assiduously doing the round of the museums and the theatres, and I called repeatedly on a friend whose relations with me had already been checked by the authorities and were therefore unlikely to arouse further suspicion. A week later I returned to Moscow and was there faced with a new and somewhat risky task. I was due for a spell of leave in the Caucasus, but before going there I put in some time once again at the Commissariat of Heavy Industry. My instructions, while there, were to establish contact with a high level non-Moscow Party official. I accomplished this successfully, and my achievement was noted by a special resolution of the leadership of our movement.

Only then did I go for a rest in the North Caucasus, but I had hardly arrived in Dzhaudzhikau, when my rest was violently disturbed. It seems that the authorities had discovered a group of terrorists in Leningrad sworn to assassinate Stalin, Kirov, Molotov and Kalinin. My own movement had no connection with them and, indeed, knew nothing of their existence. But the régime was already jittery and a number of arrests were being made.

I was staying the night in the Red Army House in Dzhaudzhikau, when at about one a.m. I was awakened by a man in NKVD uniform.

"You are Tokaev?"

"I am."

"Grigory Alexandrovich?"

"That is so."

"Of the Zhukovsky Military Aeronautical Academy?"

"Quite right. What then?"

"I have the unpleasant duty to disturb you and ask you to come round to the Headquarters of the NKVD. I trust everything will be in order."

I told him to go to the devil. I was on leave, and had a right to sleep. "If you have any reason to arrest me, first inform the Zhukovsky Academy Command." I was still between the sheets. On the chair by my head lay my revolver, and no doubt the NKVD man noticed an involuntary movement of my hand in that direction, for he suddenly stepped forward and unloaded it. In the end there was nothing I could do but to go with him. At the police headquarters

I was charged with no offence, but I was informed that at the recent trial of some local "Bourgeois Nationalists" my name had been mentioned once or twice, in what connection I never learned. Knowing of my arrival in the town, the NKVD had decided to check up. In any case, it was out of the question not to examine more closely a man from "Up there"—from Leningrad where the plotters had just been discovered.

It was not a long cross-examination; I behaved myself properly though laughing uproariously at some of the questions I was asked and a number of times asking counter-questions. In the end they suggested I should put down on paper all I knew about two of the "Bourgeois Nationalists". I did so in great detail but without mentioning any oppositional activities. Then I was released with a warning that if it proved necessary enquiries would be resumed.

When morning came I went straight to the Party Provincial Committee. It was now headed by new Secretaries, recently arrived from Moscow. The First Secretary, Kazbek Butaev, was a "Party Thousand" man, originally mobilised for work in agricultural machinery stations, but now suddenly transferred to this position. I had last met him at the farewell party given for him in Moscow; we were all Ossetians—the famous partisan of the Civil War Tavashev, Butaev, myself, and several other men and women whose names need not be mentioned. It was not a political gathering but the kind of gay Caucasian evening from which people come away close friends. Now I made my protest to him against NKVD methods. I put the whole story of my examination down in writing, and said that when I got back to Moscow I would protest to my military command. Butaev heartily agreed with my attitude and did all he could to see that I was not annoyed again. In my presence he told a representative of the NKVD that I was acquainted with Ordzhonikidze himself.

Ridiculous as it may sound, this was enough to make the NKVD man infinitely more restrained and polite. He apologised for the misunderstanding and assured me that I was under no police suspicion at all. As a matter of fact he was lying. Indeed, he lied so assiduously that he lied himself into arrest over the whole business, getting himself classed an "enemy of the people" only a few months later, in 1935.

ASSASSINATION OF KIROV

I RETURNED to Moscow from the Caucasus early in October. Not only was I not rested, I had worn myself out and had grown much thinner. The inward tension and the incessant need for vigilance had exhausted me. Now to my other anxieties was added something I had never anticipated—I found myself at a Conference of the *military* underground. No special approach was made in advance, I was merely taken on a plausible pretext to a place the existence of which I could never have suspected. The sense of having been observed and chosen, even though it was by people who were prominent in the State and whose views I largely shared, was in itself disturbing. Equally so was the further proof which this meeting afforded of the importance of the opposition and of the fact that we were perhaps on the verge of great events.

The Conference was presided over by an army officer of the highest rank. I found myself among people whom until that instant I had believed to be completely loyal Stalinists. Among them was an exceptionally beautiful young woman to whom her husband's ADC had presented me at a party during the last May Day festivities. I had danced with her once or twice and she had then invited me to her house, saying with a laugh: "You needn't be worried, my husband isn't jealous." Now I discovered what this meant—her husband was a key figure at this Military Underground Conference. As I sat next to her, I was overwhelmed with the realisation of how true it was that Stalin, Molotov and Kirov could trust nobody.

It occurred to me to wonder at the great distance I myself had travelled from my initial loyalty to the régime. It must indeed have been a long way if these people, to whom I owed no allegiance, thus trusted me. How confident they already felt of me was revealed later in the evening: publicly, before the whole meeting, with military curtness, they put to me a request to perform a certain action (what, I cannot state here) which was necessary for their anti-Stalin work. Was I ready for such a step?

Never before had I been called upon to make so momentous a decision at such short notice and in so little time. I knew that such

a request as theirs would be made only if it was unavoidable. I also realised what my refusal would mean—they would never trust me again; and the proof they had just given me of their confidence was priceless to me. I said I would do what they wanted, whenever they wished. In the name of the assembled men and women, the Chairman thanked me.

What was required of me was quite simple and concrete. The preparations were not my concern and they were to take some time. In October I was told that for an unforeseen reason the event had to be put off till November; then there was another postponement, and then a third.

The strain of waiting was hardly bearable. My physical condition had always been excellent. But now I shrank visibly. My fellow students thought I was getting consumption and, just after the third postponement of the date, they got the authorities to send me for a fortnight to the Sokolniky Sanatorium for Senior Officers.

On 1st December, 1934, the weather was cold and dry. I had gone ski-ing in the forest near the sanatorium with Brigadier Kurdiumov from the Kuibyshev Military Engineering Academy. We had hardly gone a mile when we were overtaken by a young Lieutenant who, in great emotion, told us he was sent to fetch us back. "What has happened?" we asked. He could only tell us it was something extremely serious. When we returned the sanatorium was in turmoil. Some patients were in tears, others were gloomily silent.

The news had just been posted up. It was a Government communiqué:

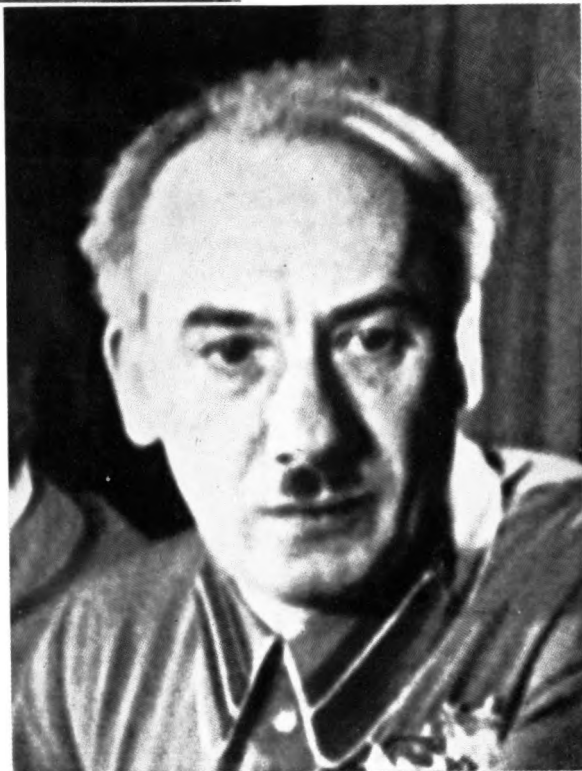
On 1st December, at 16.30 hours, in the city of Leningrad in the former Smolny Institute, Headquarters of the Leningrad Party Committee, Sergey Mironovich Kirov, member of the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and Secretary of the Central and Leningrad Committees of the all-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), lost his life at the hand of an assassin sent by the enemies of the working class. The assassin was arrested, and his identity is being investigated.

There was indeed no doubt as to the seriousness of the event, perhaps the most serious since the Soviet Union had been founded. The shot which had killed Kirov was aimed not only at him but at the very heart of the Politbureau. This was a day which shook the whole Empire. It was to be followed by many days stained with blood.

I must make one thing clear. Neither my own underground movement nor the military group into which I had been drawn had



S. M. Kirov (assassinated in 1934)



G. Yagoda, 1891–1938

had anything whatsoever to do with the initiation, preparation or execution of the killing of Kirov. When we heard of it we were horrified because we knew that this was not the way to achieve our aims, and we also knew that the consequences would be terrible. I am not exaggerating when I say that the first few hours after the news came out aged me considerably and, although some people say that this is impossible, added to my grey hairs. My room mate first thought I was ill and wanted to call a doctor; then he ascribed my altered appearance to the operation of unclean forces and asked to be transferred to a different ward. Most people at the sanatorium fortunately thought that I was grieving for Kirov, especially as they knew that I wrote a personal letter of condolence to his widow, whom I knew quite well.

Before his death Kirov had achieved the position of chief dictator next to Stalin. He had been a Party member since 1904. In the years of the Revolution and the Civil War he had taken part in the sovietisation of the Northern Caucasus and become Secretary of the Central Committee of Azerbaydzhan. From this post he was recalled by Stalin to take over Zinovyev's position as principal figure of Leningrad and to become a member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party as well as a member of the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and First Secretary of the Leningrad Provincial and City Committees of the Party. He was perhaps the best orator among the leaders and the most loyal, most consistent and most fanatical Stalinist in the country. He was also a magnificent organiser. But his invariable savagery towards those who disagreed with the régime is indescribable. Between 1926 and 1934 he earned for himself the title of "the iron hand which rules Leningrad"; he turned the great city into a barrack; the least sign of opposition was ruthlessly stamped out; Trotskyists, Zinovyevists, Riutinists, Bukharinists—his decision was always the same: "Shoot them."

When in future historians come to assess the responsibility for the quenching of independent thought, for the annihilation of the kulaks, for the forcible collectivisation of the peasants, they will find that criminal number one was Stalin, number two Kirov, and Molotov only number three. If much suffering Leningrad ever tells its own story, the second executioner will be found to be Zhdanov, but the first will be Kirov. So it was not remarkable that the oppositionists of Leningrad fastened their hatred on him. When the assassin, Nikolaev, at his first cross-examination declared that the Leningrad opposition had its own special accounts to settle with

Kirov, he was only being just. The error lay only in the method of settlement.

That particular day at the Smolny there was to have been a plenary sitting of the Leningrad Party Committee and of the Party's leading men there; Kirov was to make a three-hour survey of the conclusions of the November plenum of the Party Central Committee. He was in fact ready to deliver his report and had the script in his left hand when, at four-thirty, he left his study and walked down the corridor towards the assembly hall. He was eight paces from his room when he was shot in the back, from close quarters, with a *Nagan* pistol. The bullet entered his skull and mortally damaged the cerebellum and the left side of the cerebrum. The bullet entered to the left of and above the left occiput and emerged through the left frontal ridge. Nevertheless, Kirov was still alive twenty-five minutes later, though without consciousness. He was carried back to his study, and Professors Dobrotvorsky, Dzhanelidze and Hesse, who were called in, arrived, only to find life extinct.

The Smolny filled with chaotic rumours. It was whispered that the building was surrounded by rebels, that there were conspirators among the members of the Plenum Board itself, that the Baltic Fleet had mutinied and was sailing from Kronstadt to Leningrad, that in Moscow there was street fighting, and that Stalin and Molotov were under arrest. In reality, of course, nothing of the sort had happened. All that the rumours proved was the insecurity of the régime—just as the assassination of Kirov proved the stupidity of part of the opposition.

Armed units of the NKVD and agents of the Secret Police, headed in person by Medved, the NKVD chief in Leningrad, moved rapidly into the Smolny buildings. The participators in the Plenary Session were locked up in the hall and examined one by one. Medved announced that if the conspirators did not confess, every single man would be summarily shot. At the same time the railway stations, the Neva bridges, the prisons, the post and the telegraph offices, were put under guard. On 3rd December the Tass Agency published an NKVD announcement that the assassin, Leonid Vassilyevich Nikolaev, a Party member and an officer of the Leningrad Headquarters of the Workers' and Peasant Inspectorate, had made a complete confession. This in fact was a lie. Neither then nor later did Nikolaev confess, and he was eventually shot without yielding the vital information which the Stalinists wanted of him. Nikolaev had merely carried out the decision of others. Kotolymov, another man who was inculpated, was also merely a subordinate; he had

given Nikolaev his instructions, but neither of them was an organiser.

On getting news of the assassination, Moscow concluded that a rebellion had begun in the northern city with its great tradition of uprisings. Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhdanov, Yagoda of the NKVD and Zakovsky, his assistant, personally went to Leningrad with special NKVD forces in a number of special trains, to crush the rebels. Beria at that time was still Secretary of the Trans-Caucasian Regional Committee of the Party; he was at once given full powers over the whole Caucasus against the possibility of an armed anti-Soviet struggle there. Similar powers were given to Postyshev in the Ukraine, and to Gikalo in Belorussia.

Only a *few hours* after the assassination, the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee (the Government), on Stalin's insistence, took the following decisions:

1. The authorities were to deal summarily with all cases of alleged plotting or commission of terrorist acts.
2. The courts were not to allow any delay of execution of any death sentences pronounced in such cases, as the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee did not consider it possible to accept any appeals.
3. The NKVD was to execute all death sentences immediately after conviction (see Soviet press of 4th December, 1934).

In addition, the Government proclaimed the following amendments to existing legislation:

1. Investigations to be brought to completion within ten days.
2. Charge to be delivered to the accused within twenty-four hours.
3. Cases to be tried without the presence of the accused.
4. No appeal to the Courts of Cassation or to the Government to be allowed.
5. Sentences to be executed immediately.

On 4th December the NKVD announced that for neglect of duty in connection with the maintenance of State Security the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Yagoda, had relieved of their functions and handed over for trial: F. D. Medved, NKVD chief in Leningrad; F. T. Fomin, his assistant, and senior NKVD officers in Leningrad, Gorin, Lobov, Yanishevsky, Petrov, Paltsevich and Moskvina. These were all sent to concentration camps and forced

labour. Medved's place was taken by Agranov, a deputy chief of the NKVD, who in turn was removed a fortnight later, when another deputy, Zakovsky, a man notorious for his savagery, was appointed.

The same process was repeated throughout the Soviet Union. The authorities completely lost their heads. There was no longer any sense of proportion. Nobody any longer knew whom to consider a friend, whom an enemy.

In the night of 2nd December I was taken from my sanatorium straight to the NKVD headquarters in Sretenka Street in Moscow. There I was subjected to a painstaking enquiry concerning everybody and everything I knew in Leningrad. The formal pretext for this enquiry was a letter of condolence I wrote to Kirov's widow, the real reason was my record. The examination, however, was conducted quietly, and in the early morning I was driven back to the sanatorium. Nevertheless, this occurrence added to my alarm, the more so that the NKVD men were too polite and never once enquired directly concerning people or matters they might have had good reason to be interested in.

I decided to return to the Zhukovsky Academy, although my period of sick leave was not yet up. The atmosphere there was indescribable. A stranger might have thought that it was here, not in the Smolny building in Leningrad, that Kirov had been shot. I can remember one of the Commissars, half demented, shaking his fists at a closed Party assembly and yelling hoarsely that the Academy had turned into a centre of conspirators against our glorious Central Committee of the Party. On another occasion, in the mess, Battalion Commissar Talalay declared roundly that "we ought to shoot at least a quarter of the students and the staff, if we were to have decency and order". It was much the same in the other military establishments. The armed forces were under grave suspicion.

This hysteria was in fact artificially created by official organs of the Party and Government who were prompted to it by the Kremlin. It was Stalin who coined the notorious slogan: The Revolution can trust no man. It was Stalin personally who issued orders for the arrest of nearly the whole command of the NKVD, of the Central Executive Committee Military School in the Kremlin, and of certain other institutions. He alone was responsible for introducing a state of emergency in the armed forces. His object was to have all the reins in his own hands against the possibility of an uprising.

The decisions taken by the Government on 3rd December were only the beginning of the organisation of terror. On 5th December

Pravda wrote: "The wrath of tens of millions outraged by this loathsome crime will fall on any who attempt to lay hands on the achievements of our country. With red hot branding irons the working nation will continue to cauterise and destroy its enemies. Be more wary! Be doubly, trebly vigilant!" The following day, all newspapers published a communiqué, giving the names of leading personnel who had been condemned and shot *within less than one hundred hours* after the assassination of Kirov.¹

In every Republic and in every large city of the Union, all those who could possibly be suspected of direct or indirect participation in the planning of "terrorist acts" were being feverishly exterminated, and, as later trials were to show, ordinary disagreement with the policy of the Politbureau was in time to be classed as "terrorist acts".

On 7th December, a week after the assassination, *Pravda* came out with the headlines: "Vigilance! Revolutionary Vigilance!"

¹ A. Concerning Leningrad

A Circuit Session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. composed of Comrade Matulievich as Chairman and Comrades Dimitriev and Rychkov at Leningrad on 5th December *in camera* for preparation and organisation of terrorist acts against officers of the Soviet régime and under Sub-sections 8 and 11 of Section 58 of the Criminal Code, sentenced to death by shooting: I. I. Larin, P. M. Trankovsky, S. M. Trankovsky, A. I. Bogomolov, E. I. Kitain, P. T. Petrov, G. D. Dalov, P. P. Georgyev, P. M. Stoyanov, I. I. Azusov, Kh. M. Stoyanov, I. L. Kiranov, G. G. Petrov, G. K. Yegorov, A. G. Smurov, A. A. Selivanov, V. S. Klochkov, M. F. Saltinsky-Kuranov-Beregovoy, S. O. Gurin, A. E. Fadeyev, Y. M. Nikolaevsky, N. V. Vladimirov, N. M. Chukanov, G. D. Dodonov, D. D. Ustrogov, B. G. Ustrugov, V. G. Afansasyev, N. N. Mater, A. I. Ivanov, E. G. Griger, A. M. Chinov, P. S. Antonov, A. K. Nozdrunov, G. D. Durbov, N. I. Masyachin, N. S. Komarov. The property of the condemned to be confiscated. The sentences have been carried out.

B. Concerning Moscow

A Circuit Session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. composed of Comrade Ulrich as Chairman and Comrades Goriachev and Zarianov on 5th December *in camera* for preparation and organisation of terrorist acts against officers of the Soviet régime sentenced to death by shooting: P. V. Vasilyev, A. I. Rumyantsev, A. N. Pozdnyakov, B. D. Bobrov, I. I. Paneyakh, S. S. Stroganov, I. V. Sidorenko, N. F. Sidorov, K. K. Manukhov, Y. Y. Kolvenac, M. I. Ivanovsky, V. I. Sidorov, E. S. Knushevitzky, A. M. Gaponenko, D. G. Rechiany, Z. G. Bulygin, K. Kh. Rozenberg, B. V. Karnitzky, O. D. Panyushkin, M. N. Zdobinov-Vetkov, K. M. Eismont, V. V. Volkov, S. G. Sevastianov, N. R. Shtokolkin, M. M. Sass, V. N. Nefedov, I. Kh. Repenko, A. M. Prutkov, F. A. Sergeyev, I. I. Karnaukhov, A. A. Kozlov, D. A. Khabalenko. The property of the condemned to be confiscated. The sentences have been carried out.

C. Concerning Belorussia

The following are to be handed over to the Court of the Military Tribunal and the charge of preparation and organisation of terrorist acts by them summarily examined: A. Korbut, F. Statkevich, S. Sosnovsky, N. Fedorovich, A. Getman, V. Korzun, A. Chubukov, S. Sheiman, I. Kabanov, P. Azarenko, A. Kirpichenko.

Keener eyes, better aimed blows against the enemies! A merciless settlement with the monsters of the counter-revolution!" Ten days later the term "monsters of the counter-revolution" was given a more precise definition. A resolution of a plenary sitting of the Moscow Committee of the Party on 17th December contained the following key words: "Loathsome, fateful agents of the class enemy, low-down dregs of the former *Zinovyev* anti-Party group, have torn Comrade Kirov from our midst."

The wheels of the great machine immediately began to turn in the indicated direction. The following day, *Pravda* carried a long article of guidance to *Agitprop* personnel regarding the *Zinovyev* opposition. Thousands of newspapers and magazines, scores of books and pamphlets, countless broadcasts and lectures began to analyse the concept *Zinovyevist*, while *Zinovyev* himself and his associates, not one of whom had had the slightest connection with the assassination, were arrested by the NKVD. Thus these men, who were one time close associates of Lenin, who had played so active a part in the October Revolution, who were the builders of the Party and members of its Politbureau, these men who, though ideologically opposed to Stalin, had deified him at the 17th Party Congress, now received their full and final rewards. The assassination of Kirov was to Stalin a heaven-sent opportunity for a mortal settlement with anybody who might inconvenience him; he started with *Zinovyev* and his followers.

Still the temperature continued to rise. On 22nd December the Tass Agency published a NKVD communiqué concerning the discovery of an alleged "Leningrad Centre". (There was in fact no such underground organisation. The names "Leningrad Centre" and "Moscow Centre" were invented by the Stalinists to conceal the names of other existing organisations.) The alleged members of the Leningrad Centre were J. J. Kotolynov, V. V. Rumyantsev, S. O. Mendelshtam, N. I. Myasnikov, V. S. Levshin, N. N. Shatsky, L. I. Sositzky and L. V. Nikolaev. All these alleged *Zinovyevists* had in fact detested the very name of *Zinovyev* ever since his declaration of loyalty to Stalin at the 17th Party Congress—but they were all Party members who had taken part in the famous Leningrad Conference of 1926, a Conference unique in Soviet history for having passed a resolution of lack of confidence in the Party Central Committee headed by Stalin.

More surprises were in store for the Party. On 22nd December *Pravda* wrote: "It appears that the assassins, loathsome agents of the class enemy, prostituted scoundrels, declared rogues, cowards

and traitors were . . . Zinovyev, Kamenev . . . Bakayev, Kuklin . . . Evdokimov, Zalutski . . . Kotolynov, Rumiantsev . . . Shatsky, Tollazov." These were all very important Party officers and men whom for one reason or another it was convenient to put away. Evdokimov, for instance, had certainly no connection whatsoever with the assassination, nor had he anything in common with the Zinovyevists, but he was a man of great courage who had always been a consistent idealist Communist. When it was suggested to him that he should speak at the 17th Congress, he replied: "I don't like addressing counter-revolutionaries."

Thus the whole Soviet Union began to reek with blood. Arrests and shootings were multiplied and it was open to any man to denounce any other for the most fantastic crimes: the authorities merely praised him for his vigilance. No matter what a man was doing, he might be easing nature, he was never proof against the attentions of a "vigilant" fellow citizen, ready to lift an accusing finger and demand what business he was at. One member of our underground group told us how he was stopped and searched, and even had to show his tongue, as if it might have conspiratorial signs on it.

For my own part, I took every precaution, going through my possessions and destroying anything compromising as soon as I returned to the Academy—not that there was much. I had already been careful; but you never knew in those days. Kirov himself had taught: "Any bandit, marauder or other opponent of the Soviet régime should be shot on the spot, without trial, on the slightest suspicion."

Actually, during this first wave of the terror nothing worse happened to me than an occasional fright. Thus on the afternoon of Kirov's funeral I had gone to call on a friend and was just about to ring the door bell of his flat when a hand was placed over my lips and I was pulled swiftly through another door on the same landing. "Sh! Grigory Alexandrovich," I heard. "For heaven sake not a word. *They* are in there. He has been arrested. They are waiting to see who visits him or rings him up. I saw you just in time through my letter slot . . ." The speaker took me quickly through his own flat and out by a back entrance. Years after, we often laughed over this incident, especially since before it, through a youthful quarrel, we had scarcely been on speaking terms.

By mid-January leading Party men were aghast at the speed with which the terror had spread and a few of them began to protest. One of these was A. S. Yenukidze, a Party member since 1898, a

member of the Central Committee of the Party and a secretary of the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee. A convinced Communist, he was, it is true, a dictator, but a frank dictator, without hypocrisy or cynicism. The assassination of Kirov, who was a friend of his, probably upset him not much less than Stalin, but the mounting hysteria upset him still more. He thought that Kirov's assassins should be punished, but that this should not be made the pretext for the savage annihilation of all dissidence.

People who were close to him assured me that Yenukidze went so far as to advise Stalin to retire temporarily from public life. "Soso," he said (this was the name by which Stalin's few intimates knew him), "everybody is saying that the Party and the people disapprove and it would be wiser for you to withdraw for a time from the leadership." Exactly how Stalin took this I was never told, but certainly it was the beginning of Yenukidze's fall from favour. In 1935-36 there were frequent clashes. In 1937, together with Colonel General Gay, Yenukidze fled from Moscow to Transcaucasia, where he proposed to establish an independent Soviet Republic. However, he was captured near Baku by security officers and shot. On 22nd January, 1935, V. V. Kuibyshev and G. K. Ordzhonikidze, together with several others, also demanded that the extermination of the old guard of the Bolsheviks should cease and, in particular, stood up for the Old Bolshevik Society in Moscow. But Stalin and Molotov refused to listen and accused them too of "social-democratic tendencies". It was said that Cherviakov, Chairman of the Belorussian Government, made the same suggestion as Yenukidze and suffered the same fate. The Praesidium of the Society of Old Bolsheviks sent a written appeal to the Politbureau not to turn the assassination of Kirov into an excuse for setting up a régime of "black hundred" reaction, but no attention was paid to them.

As always at such a time, rumour was rife. In the Zhukovsky Academy it was said that the Proletarian Sharp-Shooting Division had attempted to seize the Kremlin, but that Stalin had crushed it with NKVD forces. Another widely spread rumour asserted that a group of senior Air Force officers, based on the Zhukovsky Academy, was at work on a plan for a military-political *coup d'état* starting with the arrest of the entire Politbureau. Finally, it "became known" that during the 17th Congress of the Party a group of NKVD leaders had plotted to arrest the whole Congress and bring about a revolution. Some bold spirits at one of the military academies even published a leaflet with a story that Stalin had gone mad, Molotov was in hiding, Kaganovich had assumed Stalin's place,

Postyshev and Kossyor were preparing the session of the Ukraine, Bukharin and Rykov "somewhere in the U.S.S.R." had set up a provisional revolutionary Government, and Voroshilov had been shot by Marshal Yegorov.

Without fire there is no smoke. About this time, indeed, Kuibyshev suddenly died from "heart failure", and Yagoda was dismissed from his post and arrested. One by one, leading Party and Government men were vanishing.

* * * * *

My hope that the storm had passed me over was shaken before the end of January, when I was again summoned to the NKVD, "by way of prophylactic measure," as the examining officer assured me. The Zhukovsky Academy command were not to know anything about it, he said; "tomorrow morning you will be back at your lectures."

He asked me to tell him in detail how and why I had first come to Leningrad. I told him. He put down something in his notebook. In the course of the conversation, I showed that I knew of Evdokimov's arrest. "And how do you know of this, Comrade Tokaev?" "Very simply," I said, "the country is full of rumours and, after all, I live within a stone's throw of the Kremlin. I can tell you that not only has Evdokimov been arrested, but so has Bakaev."

"And have you had any dealings with them? Have you ever been at the Smolny? When? With whom? On what business?"

I explained that I had been there several times, at meetings and other legitimate social functions. As for Evdokimov and Bakaev, I had met them but they meant nothing special to me. "For me they are Party workers, just as you are."

"Now they are Enemies of the People, not Party workers," he said. "Enemies of the People?" I remember replying, "I have known them solely as Party workers."

This NKVD inquisitor was of about the same age as myself but at the time I never suspected what I learned later, that he too was an underground oppositionist, one of the boldest *inside the NKVD system*. He knew all about me, about the underground group to which I belonged and the military underground meeting which I had attended, and why I had grey hair, but in those days he never gave me the slightest hint. It was not till later, when he had been shot, that I came upon his name in a special resolution of our underground group, mentioning his services to *our* cause, not Stalin, and understood at last why he had summoned me, as he had

summoned many others: he was busy saving men, not destroying them. A number of outstanding personalities of the underground owed their lives to him, among them some of the anti-Stalinists who are working at this moment in the Soviet Union. His investigations were made under orders from NKVD headquarters, but he knew what questions to ask and how to ask them in such a way as to satisfy his superiors and yet to protect the men he examined.

Keeping in mind the memory of this heroic comrade, I am filled with horror, when, nowadays, I hear that "all the NKVD" ought to be exterminated as Stalinist terrorists. In any case, to condemn a large body of men wholesale is to take over the faults of the enemy himself. There is only one way, and that is to assume from the outset that every man is an individual; not every man in NKVD uniform is an agent of despotism, and the time will come, with the tables turned, when it will be possible to say who in those days before the liberation of the U.S.S.R. was the hero and who the real coward and lackey of the tyrants.

The storm indeed seemed to have passed me when by my own folly I gave the enemy his opportunity. It was terribly cold that February, 1935. The dry snow, many degrees below zero, creaked underfoot. A man's spittle would fall to the ground frozen. Lecture rooms, although heated, were so icy on this particular morning that we were allowed to sit in our greatcoats until the second break. The intense cold seemed to increase the general depression. Coming out of the classroom, we began shouldering one another about the corridor to warm and cheer ourselves. There were twenty-three of us, a group studying aircraft construction. "Tell us a story, Grisha," somebody asked me. I was reckoned a good story-teller and I tried to live up to my reputation. I now told an anecdote I had recently heard. It was not a good story, but it nearly cost me my life.

"You know, Comrades," I said, "that the capitalists, Fascists, White Guards and other riff-raff, who day and night suck the blood of the workers and peasants of the world, are threatening the U.S.S.R. And so our glorious Government and Party, led by brilliant Comrade Stalin, masterfully decided that it was indispensable to augment our powers of defence." (Such parody of Kremlin talk always caused uproarious laughter.) "So," I said, "the brilliant mind of Comrade Stalin has succeeded in coming to the conclusion that the country must have an air force, tanks, a fleet, infantry and other weapons of war." (More laughter.) "But this was not the only merit of our wise leaders. They not merely required us to train, they had decided to train themselves. Since Voroshilov

was considered the best revolver shot in the Union he was put in command, and he decided to teach shooting with a three-barrelled rifle, of course, fitted with a bayonet." (More laughter.) "And what about Molotov?" somebody asked. "Molotov?" I thought a moment, "Molotov is a very special kind of leader, he is a specialist in the seated posture." (More laughter, Molotov was nicknamed "granite backside" because all his work during the Revolution and since then had been sedentary.) "Further," I said, "the leaders had resolved to form their own military training *kruzhok*, or study-circle, with Voroshilov in command, since he was People's Commissar of Defence." (More laughter, since everybody knew that Voroshilov occupied that post as Stalin's friend and was hopeless as a modern military expert.) "And Voroshilov," I said, "ordered daily marching exercise." "Nonsense, Grisha," said somebody, "how can they? They are busy governing all day." "Governing?" I cried, "of course, marching came before such trifles, and Voroshilov got to work, and they all had to put on simple private's uniform. This suited Comrade Stalin, but Molotov demanded trousers with leather let into the seat. . . . And in due course, there was Stalin practising marching in his study; he marched straight forward until he came to the wall, then Voroshilov sent an adjutant to order a right-about turn, but Stalin said he would not turn back. Then 'wheel to the right' cried Voroshilov, but Stalin replied that he would not turn to the right. Then 'wheel left' shouted Voroshilov, but Stalin answered that he would not turn to the left any more than he would turn to the right, 'besides,' he added, 'the wall is no hindrance, don't you know that I have laid it down that there is no obstacle which a Bolshevik cannot master'."

That was all. We went into class. After about ten minutes, my neighbour handed me a note telling me that one of our number, Kiselyov, was writing a report on me. Kiselyov did indeed hand a note to the Party Organiser of our group, Krainov, who shot me an uneasy glance. A few hours later the incident was brought up before a specially convened Party assembly. Kiselyov had actually written the following: "Comrade Krainov, as a Party member, I consider myself bound to report that Tokaev's story at which you laughed together with the rest, is counter-revolutionary White-Guard propaganda. I consider it a sally of an enemy of the people. For this reason, having regard to revolutionary vigilance, I request you, as Party Organiser, immediately to summon a Party assembly and investigate Tokaev's counter-revolutionary White-Guardist act."

CONSEQUENCES OF AN ANECDOTE

PERHAPS THERE is no better way of illustrating the arbitrary and lunatic nature of Stalinist despotism than by telling all that happened to me on this occasion as objectively as possible. Let me start with Kiselyov, the man who denounced me.

Kiselyov was about my own age—twenty-five at that time; like myself he was a *Party-thousand* man and we had entered the Academy in the same year. Politically he was well developed, nor was he backward in his studies, even though there were moments when, as he put it himself, his “topknot refused to work”. He had a peculiar nervous laugh, which came in sharp unnatural bursts, and there was an odd air of insincerity about him, even when he meant to appear sincere. What you could not know about him unless you knew him very well was that, in common with other Stalinist fanatics, he suffered from acute careerism—an ambition which counted on rising through the failure of others. This characteristic he shared with his close friend, a pupil of the Academy named Leiman, an ignoble individual who backed him up in denouncing me.

Krainov, however, who was terrorised into passing on the denunciation, was quite different. He was an old soldier and an old Party member. Unhappily, his mental equipment was below the standard necessary for the Zhukovsky Academy, and he was always at the bottom of the class. But he was as straight as a die. As Party Organiser he knew of my bad record, but he behaved in a comradely way, never reminding me of it unless he was forced to do so officially. On this occasion, his first step was to try to persuade Kiselyov and Leiman to drop the matter. Next he asked the Commissar to whose notice it was brought to tone the charge down. He failed, however, and, two hours later, the Faculty Duty Officer appeared in our classroom and reported formally to the lecturer that I was required immediately by Brigade Commissar Zelentsov (rank P-7). I rose. Under the table, my neighbour Shishmaryov tapped my knee, as if to say: “We know how you’re feeling, but keep your head up!” I tried to meet Kiselyov’s eyes, or Leiman’s, but they looked away.

I accompanied the Duty Officer down the corridor. After a

moment, he spoke. "In trouble, Grisha?" (He too was a Cadet-student.)

"You should know, you've been sent for me."

"I knew you'd be sore with me," he said. He was a friendly, genial fellow from the Volga country.

"Nonsense," I assured him, "but what's cooking?"

"Keep this to yourself. Kiselyov, Leiman and Krainov have been to see Zelentsov, and I heard your name mentioned as a White Guard, a counter-revolutionary and an anti-Soviet propagandist. Is it true Grisha?"

"What do you think?"

He merely shrugged his shoulders. What point was there in his thinking?

Then he turned to me uneasily. "Grisha!"

"Well, what is it, speak up."

"Zelentsov ordered me to take away your pistol."

"Oh! So the valiant Commissar is afraid to see me with my pistol. An hour ago I was 'Comrade Tokaev', now I suppose he really does think I am a White bandit."

"You know very well," he replied pleadingly, "what times are like. So what about it? Come on, Grisha, let me have the pistol."

"Go to hell," I said, "and leave my pistol alone."

Poor fellow, he was in a difficult position. He did not insist. When I entered the room of the Brigade Commissar and reported, I added: "Comrade Commissar, the Duty Officer required me to hand over my pistol, but I refused."

"You refused?" he said, very quietly, "and why, may I ask? Do regulations not apply to you? It was an order."

"I know that well enough, Comrade Commissar. I told him to go to hell. I will give up my pistol only on direct orders from my immediate superior officers."

"So you told the Duty Officer to go to hell. . . . Well, it's like you. . . . Now I order you to go to the Duty Room and give up your pistol. I am your Commissar. Is that sufficient?"

It was, I left the room, handed my pistol in its holster to the Duty Officer, and returned.

Zelentsov was neither a fanatic nor a man of independent thought, simply an executant of orders from above. Until now, I had never been in conflict with him; on the contrary, my eager participation in political and social activities had brought us together and there was more in our relationship than dry military formality. From time to time, he picked me from among other political "literates" to give

extra-mural lectures. He thought me one of the best speakers in the Faculty and sometimes assigned to me an official duty such as a speech of welcome to a theatrical company.

"Be seated, Comrade Tokaev," he pointed to an armchair, "and let us have a talk about a subject of some unpleasantness for you and for me."

"I will stand, Comrade Commissar," I said.

"When the Commissar of his Faculty asks a Cadet to be seated, he should sit down."

"When the Commissar of a Faculty disarms a Cadet, the Cadet acquires the moral right to learn from his Commissar the reason for so severe a measure, and only then will he be seated."

"Comrade Tokaev," he said, "sooner or later that tongue of yours will get you into trouble."

"Thank you for the warning, Comrade Commissar, but my tongue can only get *me* into trouble, so I feel others need not bother about it."

"In my opinion you are behaving impudently"—but even this Zelentsov said without particular warmth.

"Again, I thank you for drawing my attention to it."

Zelentsov shook his head without a word, then sitting down himself, in a very low voice again asked me to sit down. I did so. He took up a piece of paper, glanced at it for a moment, then asked: "Is it true that you go in for counter-revolutionary and White Guard propaganda in the Academy?"

"As I understand the words—and if I understand anything at all—I do not."

"Comrade Tokaev," he said, "it is impossible to talk normally to you." He leant back in his chair and began to ask me questions. He took every point made by Kiselyov. The denunciation had described my "crime" in accurate detail, and all I had to do was to confirm or deny it. To deny it was senseless, there had been too many witnesses, so I "confessed" but protested vigorously that there had not been a crime.

By this time the news of that "counter-revolutionary fellow's" action must have flashed from end to end of the Academy. The telephone bell rang. It was Petrikovsky, Secretary of the Faculty Party Branch, a Cadet-student on a course parallel to mine, but a much older man with eight lozenges on his uniform, rank P-10. He now told Zelentsov (who, by the way, though he was Commissar over both of us, had only one lozenge on his sleeve) that at four-thirty sharp there would be a Special Party Assembly to ventilate

"the act of that scoundrel". Two hours ago we had been smoking together, Seryozha and Grisha to one another!

As I went with Zelentsov to the assembly, I saw, posted on the notice-board the announcement: "*Today at 16.30 hours in Auditorium 117 there will be a Special Closed Assembly of the Party Branch of Aircraft Design Department. Agenda: Expulsion from the Party of Enemy of the People Tokaev. Attendance obligatory.*"

Nota bene, the Commissar had not finished his preliminary questioning of the accused, there had been no trial, but the "crime" had been judged and the sentence decided in advance.

The proceedings were opened by Makarov, Party Branch Secretary for my year of study, a Cadet-student and "Party Thousand" man like myself. In the room were the very officers who had enjoyed and laughed at my funny story. "Comrades," Makarov began, "how could it be that till now there has been an Enemy of the People concealed in our midst, a White Guard camp follower, a pawn of the class enemy, a counter-revolutionary, Tokaev? There can be but one answer," Makarov ponderously answered himself, "we have become gapers, we have lost our vigilance, we have failed to make the proper deductions from the assassination of Comrade Kirov, we have forgotten the Capitalist encirclement."

Now I was to be linked up with Capitalist encirclement! I could have laughed out loud, had I not been sitting there already disgraced, disarmed, like a proved criminal. On and on Makarov went, mouthing the bedraggled words and phrases. The Secretary scratched away, taking down the minutes.

After Makarov, others rushed in like sheep following their leader. Every man present was required to make his own statement about my "counter-revolutionary sally". Men with whom I shared living quarters, with whom that morning I had breakfasted, joking about this and that, now spoke of me in such terms that a stranger might have imagined I had a secret wireless transmitter and a string of grenades under my tunic and somewhere at my back a whole arsenal of lethal weapons. It was painful—not because I imagined for a moment that this nonsense would ever be accepted as true by the higher authorities, but because those who were driven to speak of me in such terms were my closest comrades. For it was completely impossible for them to believe what they were saying. This was the appalling thing. They felt that they had no other course but to parrot this lunatic slander.

Take, for instance, Shustval—a Major in rank, a Test Pilot Cadet-student, a serious sort of fellow. Only last night he had come

to me for help in his work—a problem in constructional mechanics; now he stretched out his arm and cried: “This vermin must be crushed before he sullies our beautiful homeland.” I tried to catch his eye, but he avoided mine.

Then came Leiman, the tallest man in the Academy, but with the lowest ethical standards. He had laughed loudest at my anecdote, now he screamed the loudest invective. I was an enemy of the people who had so far escaped the executioner’s bullet. A creature who had long since sold himself to the Capitalist Imperialists. Quite possibly one of those guilty of Comrade Kirov’s death. Why waste time on such scum? Shoot him. *Periculum in mora!*

One of our women Cadet-student colleagues, Marina Osipova, a Party candidate, got up to speak, but she was an inexperienced orator and, out of sheer nervousness, found herself repeating my anecdote. This was unforgivable in an assembly of this kind. The incriminating words could not be mentioned even for the purposes of being denounced. Petrikovsky leapt from his place, banged the table with his fists and shouted: “We are not here to quote Tokaev, we are here to expel him as an enemy of the people. We shall never permit our assembly to be used for the further dissemination of these monstrous White-Guardist inventions against Comrades Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov, and anybody who attempts to do so will be charged as an accomplice.”

There were very few who did not speak against me, vying with one another to express their revolutionary vigilance. I listened in growing amazement that so little could cause so much. From that assembly I bore away with me a new intensity of hatred for what the Stalinists called “Inner-Party Democratic Centralism”. If up to then there had been any thread still binding me to the régime, it was certainly broken by Petrikovsky’s hue and cry.

Kiselyov was called on to speak last, but he said he had nothing to add to his written allegations. He was the hero of the day, a man of tremendous “revolutionary vigilance.”

Then Makarov turned to me. “White-Guardists,” he said, “are worthy of White-Guardist treatment, but our Party has always followed the principle of democratic centralism, and you therefore may have the last word for the condemnation of your loathsome acts.” This meant, not “Have you anything to say in your defence?” but “What can you say to *accuse yourself?*”—it was an invitation to grovel. All eyes were fastened on me, and I could now tell who were my enemies and who were merely cowards, for in some faces I could see the conviction that I was already a *former person*, but in

others there was shame—"Forgive us, Grisha, we had no other course."

However, instead of condemning myself, I remained where I was, quietly seated beside Zelentsov. Makarov repeated his invitation; I still said nothing. Leiman leapt to his feet and shouted that "even now this scoundrel maintains his provocative bearing towards the Party." Zelentsov whispered to me quietly that I would make a great mistake if I did not take advantage of the opportunity of speaking. I thought for some moments, then went to the tribune. There I took my time and surveyed the assembly. Yes, the majority of these men were still my comrades. Perhaps that gave me encouragement to remain a man, not to grovel, not to be a worm myself. But indeed I *could not* speak. I lived through an age in those moments, for they were moments which quite unexpectedly opened a new world to me. It was not so much that I understood—I *felt* the impossibility of living in a world where *this* could happen; and in that same moment I knew that for the future I belonged body and soul to another world. This was what was vital: the ground on which I had lived had crumbled for ever under my feet, but I realised in that same moment that I had another foothold, and from that foothold I could go forward. It did not matter that my new world was as yet unfocused; all I saw of it at that moment was that in it there would be no such inhuman masquerades as this meeting. Whether it was Capitalism or Socialism was, I now saw, relatively unimportant—anything, so long as it did not include *this*. It was *terra incognita*.

Other thoughts too crowded into my brain. I was not without some political experience. I was one of a group who had fiercely attacked Zinovyev, Kamenev and the others for their shameful capitulation at the 17th Party Congress. We had started the watchword: "a political coward and renegade is worse than any traitor." And what would my comrades, above all Belinsky, say if I went the way of such creatures as Karl Radek? What would Fedotov, now no longer of this world, have said of me? On one side of a barricade I saw a régime of reaction and terror. On the other side I saw my heroic comrades. My mind was made up. Nor did I owe my decision entirely to my own toughness: I was supported by the past. The history of the Communist Party had taught me that there can be no revolutionary democratic struggle without harsh trials; these are the testing stone of cowards and traitors, whether voluntary or involuntary. The old Revolutionary Guard had taught us that in the struggle against a police régime there is nothing more dangerous than to give way on a vital principle, for after one such capitulation

comes betrayal. The man who yields at a critical moment invariably continues to fall lower and lower, till he becomes a tool of the enemy. After all, did not the story of Radek and Zinovyev show this?

So it was that, after standing silent for some time, I turned and walked slowly back to my place. There followed another crushing speech from Makarov. "Enemy of the People Tokaev's refusal to make use of his final word is but another proof of his profound contempt for our glorious Party and its Central Committee." Zelentsov made another attempt to persuade me to "admit my errors by way of customary self-criticism"; I replied that quite enough had been said about them and, of course, that stubbornness greatly worsened my position.

The next step was that expressed in a portmanteau word "Organisationsconclusions", or "Organisational conclusions". These were: First the charge (naturally my story could not be quoted but the qualifications of my conduct were all written down); then the decisions: Tokaev was to be driven (not merely expelled) from the Party, and the Academy Command was to be requested to take the corresponding administrative steps. This meant expulsion from the Academy and handing over to the political police. (A representative of the Special Department of the NKVD was in fact present at the assembly.)

The conclusions were put to the vote. A Cadet-student named Savkin had the pluck to propose that I should merely be severely reprimanded and given a last warning. Why he did this I never found out, but it brought the whole pack of them down upon him, and the poor fellow was obliged to grovel and withdraw his amendment. The decision to expel me was then passed unanimously and, although this was against the Party's Statutes which required confirmation of the expulsion at a higher level, my Party card was there and then taken from me.

I was now a pariah of pariahs. Zelentsov conducted me to the Academy Commissar, Indrikson. Indrikson told Zelentsov that he wished to speak to me alone, and Zelentsov withdrew. . . . I left Indrikson's cabinet with his ADC, under orders to go immediately to the Senior Mess Room, on the floor below, and have a meal. I could not bear the thought of food, but the Adjutant insisted. Before I had paid my bill, a man in civilian clothes quietly sat down beside me. He was about forty, with long, rather unkempt grey hair. "Comrade Tokaev," he said, "if you have finished, will you please come over with me to the Right Wing."

The Right Wing was an annexe added to the Petrovsky Palace at some date later than the original building. Here the Special Department of the NKVD had its headquarters. In a few minutes, I crossed its threshold. The door was heavily lined with sound-insulating material and steel plate.

"I am sorry to hear what has happened, Comrade Tokaev," the NKVD man said.

"Thank you for your sympathy."

"Now what really did happen? Might I ask you to tell me all the details?"

"One of your men," I said, "was in attendance at the assembly, surely he has told you everything?"

"Of course he has told me something about it. . . . But I prefer to have the details from you yourself. You must know that when it is a matter of a man's future, we cannot accept information at second or third hand. That is our job; we are supposed to afford you protection against arbitrary action and to correct unmerited accusations."

"What exactly do you want from me?" I asked him, with reasonable calm, "why have you summoned me here? Perhaps it is better to be frank?"

"I do not want anything in particular of you, Comrade Tokaev, please do not be alarmed. My task is to put the fact of the charge against you on record and to report it to my superiors as part of my day's work. But I must do so as accurately as I can, to help you . . ."

His politeness was surprising. Too many comrades had in the past few weeks fallen at the executioner's hand. Was this a trick of some kind? I knew that I must be cautious; I also felt very sure of myself—this was my first serious experience of the NKVD—so I replied: "I know neither you nor your establishment, but I do know my own Commanding Officers, and I shall answer no questions without their orders."

He again assured me that he wished to help me. "Let us put it all down calmly in proper order." I again insisted that I could not speak except by order of my Commanding Officers; I too was bound by regulations. I rose and left him. He made no attempt to stop me, but I returned to my quarters extremely worried. Why had he let me go? What was behind it?

It was the end of the day and dark. I saw fellow Cadet-students going out to supper but, of course, none of them suggested that I should join them. By habit, I too went out, but I took a circuitous

route. As I passed the Dynamo Stadium I suddenly heard a voice behind me: "Grisha, don't look round, keep on going, but listen. . . ." It was Belinsky. He told me that my group already knew and approved what I had done and were doing all they could to save me. I must know that a hard struggle had begun. Men, even in the NKVD, who were on our side, would take whatever steps they could to sidetrack my case. But it would not be easy. Key positions must not be exposed. Still—there was a chance. I was not alone.

Slowly I wandered back to my room. To my surprise, there I found the same NKVD man who had questioned me. He was going through my things together with my room mate. Everything was strewn all over the place. I had thought my room mate an ordinary, decent human being, but here he was assisting the NKVD. I went outside and made my way over the creaking snow through the Petrovsky Park, only to return after midnight.

That night I was left in peace, though no doubt I was being watched. I breakfasted alone the next morning and went to the first lecture. Nobody greeted me. A few moments later, the Faculty Duty Officer appeared and told me that Zelentsov wanted me.

"How do you feel, Comrade Tokaev?" asked Zelentsov.

"Fair, Comrade Commissar," I said. "Please tell me if I am no longer allowed to attend lectures."

"I think you had better not for the time being," he said, "not till your case is cleared up."

That afternoon, at about three, the backwash of rumour reached me. A woman who was standing in a queue in the Military Trading Stores was heard saying: "Have you heard the latest? Another one has been expelled and arrested, Tokaev is his name; they say he was one of a band of terrorists plotting to get into the Kremlin. . . . They say he may have something to do with the assassination. . . ."

At about half-past three, I was back at the NKVD office. The same man in civilian clothes questioned me.

"Surname?"

"Surname? Don't you know my surname?"

"Surname?" he repeated, with a trace of annoyance in his voice.

"So that's where we are," I said, and spelt out my name.

"Christian name?"

"Grigory."

"Patronymic?"

"Alexandrovich."

"Date of birth?"

"13th October, 1909."

"Place?"

"The North-Ossetian Autonomous Republic, Northern Caucasus."

"Nationality?"

"Ossetian. North Ossetian."

"Social status?"

"Worker."

"Social origin?"

"My parents were working peasants."

"Education?"

"Higher, but unfinished."

"Political education?"

"I do not know what I should say. You might put intermediate or it might be higher."

"Let us put higher. Did you take part in the Revolution?"

"No. I was only eight years old."

"Did you serve in the White Army?"

"I did not."

"Did you ever belong to the Menshevik Social-Democrat Party?"

"I did not."

"Did you sympathise with the Social-Revolutionaries?"

"I did not."

"Have you ever belonged to the Trotskyists, or do you now?"

"I have never had anything in common with Trotskyism."

"Did you take part in Zinovyev's 'new opposition'?"

"I did not."

"Have you engaged in fractional activity against the Party?"

"No, I have not."

"Nor at present?"

"I have never belonged to any inner-Party faction."

"Very well. Do you adhere to the Right-wing Deviation?"

"I do not."

"Have you any relatives abroad?"

"No, I have nobody abroad."

"Do you correspond with anybody abroad?"

"I do not."

"Do you read the foreign press? Have you any links with émigré newspapers?"

"I do not read the foreign press, but up to 1933 I read a Russian émigré newspaper published in North America. It was sent me from Alaska."

"Who sent it, and why?"

"In 1931 some Ossetian émigrés (I gave their names) came back

to the U.S.S.R. from Alaska; I made their acquaintance here in Moscow and they had the newspaper sent me. It is a pro-Soviet newspaper. These friends are members or candidates of the Communist Party." (Here I may note that newspapers I had kept were studied by the security organs and nothing incriminating was found in them.)

"Have you had meetings with Bukharin?"

"I have, with the Bukharin who is a member of the Central Committee of the Party and Deputy People's Commissar of Heavy Industry, and who, as far as I know, is not accused of anything."

"I did not say he was," the NKVD man replied. "Have you ever had occasion to be in the Kremlin and meet any of the leaders?"

"I have never been in the Kremlin, but I have met Comrades Ordzhonikidze, Yenukidze, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kalinin and Postyshev, in nearly every case on official business or at assemblies."

Detail after detail went down in writing, and still the enquiry went on, covering events of which the authorities already had ample records.

"Have you ever been expelled from the Comsomol?"

"I was twice on a charge while in the Comsomol, once I was expelled, but soon after, reinstated with a reprimand."

"Have you ever been expelled from your Trade Union?"

"Yes, once, and on one occasion removed from the Trade Union Committee."

"How many times have you been on a charge in the Party?"

"In 1932 I was twice expelled, first in the Baumann Ward, then in the Academy. I have now been expelled for the third time. But in the first two cases I was reinstated with reprimands which were entered in my personal dossier."

The questions ranged from "Have you and Masha ever kissed?" to "Were you in the Leningrad plot?"

Why did I fall in love with Psherdayskaya, not with Nina Kamneva? How was it that I went to the Sokolnichesky Sanatorium just before the assassination of Kirov? Why did I pick on the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry for a holiday job, not some other Commissariat?

I realised that the questions were aimed at discovering some clue to show that I was an enemy of the people or a foreign spy, or that I had played some part in the plots to assassinate the great leaders. If the NKVD man could do this, he would be sure of his Lenin Orders in the Honours List. No doubt, he had colleagues who had already received distinctions, but he, poor fellow, had had nothing;

this in itself, in such tense weeks, was almost a crime. But what surprised me most was the amount he already knew about me; such details, for instance, as that on 13th August, 1933, when there was an Aviation Festival and the famous ANT-14 was demonstrated at the Central Aerodrome, Alksnis had spoken to me. Alksnis had attended the Festival together with Yegorov (Chief of General Staff), Goltzman (head of the Civilian Air Fleet) and Army General Eideman, and as they passed the section of the Zhukovsky Academy which included myself, Alksnis had smiled and spoken to me. I was asked why he had done this. So, as early as 1933, even Alksnis was under special supervision!

As, after a two-hour break, the examination drew on into the evening, it tended to become less and less genial in tone. My whole attention was concentrated on giving no answer which could be used against myself or my comrades. The NKVD man dropped his polite manner and began to bully. My answers also grew sharper. The whole business was wearing down my patience; besides, I was beginning to realise that my position was serious. I had no reason to count on leniency, so there seemed no reason to be particularly polite.

At last the NKVD man held out a pen and asked me to sign the minutes of my examination. I saw that these covered many pages, more than I thought he could have filled from my answers.

"Sign these papers?" I asked in surprise. "When did you have time to write all these pages? No, I have no intention of signing. I shall sign only what I write with my own hand, my own ink, on my own paper." He shot me a glance of what was clearly extreme astonishment.

"What do you mean?" He frowned. "Do you not trust me?"

"You are quite right, I do not," I replied. "You have put dozens of most unseemly questions to me, such questions that your own wife would not trust you."

"Do you realise where you are? Do you know what you are saying?"

"I know very well. I shall not sign. And please do not raise your voice. I am not yet under arrest. I am a Red Officer and a Cadet of the Military Aeronautical Academy, and I do not even know who you are."

"Drop your demagoguery," he said, "and sign at once."

I refused. He insisted and I remained stubborn. "Show me the orders of my Commanding officers by which I am bound to submit to you and not to them."

We became very heated. I was fighting the régime, as represented by him, in the name of a non-existent rule of law on which, in my pig-headedness, I relied.

At last I rose from my chair; he reached over to stop me; I took his arm and thrust it aside. Perhaps I did push him hard—by this time I was very angry. He lurched back at me and his fist crashed into my face. I saw stars, my nose began to bleed. Naturally I lost all thought of where I was. Had I been armed I would certainly have shot him. I leapt at him, but in that instant, other men rushed into the room; a blow from the butt end of a service revolver split my head, nearly knocking out my left eye, and I lost consciousness.

When I came to, I was lying on an unbearably cold floor in a cellar, frozen through and through. The temperature had been well below freezing point for weeks. My legs felt like dead tree trunks. In any case I could not have moved, for my wrists were handcuffed behind my back and the flesh of my right arm was caught in the grip, causing me intense pain. My whole body was in agony, as if nails were being driven into it. At first my left eye and cheek were numb, but after a time I seemed to be lying with my face against a raging furnace.

The records of the NKVD which in the end I did sign state that as I lay in my cellar I sang the *Internationale* and the *Marseillaise*. Perhaps the Kremlin should be proud that in its cellars are men who do not sing anti-revolutionary songs, but songs which curse tyranny and praise the never-yielding struggle against it.

SPECIAL BRANCH TREATMENT

IT WILL be remembered that it was in the Right Wing annexe to the Petrovsky Palace that the NKVD had questioned me. I therefore concluded that I now lay in some cellar of this building. If so, within only a few feet of me, my comrades would be passing to and fro throughout the day. In such circumstances the sense of isolation becomes intense to the point of agony, and I have the impression that for a long time I yelled at the top of my voice, out of an irrational need to make them hear me or at least be with me in spirit. In fact, I doubt whether I raised my voice above a weak croaking. Not merely had I been savagely beaten up, but I was chilled to the marrow of my bones, I was half paralysed with cold. I thought I knew what cold was, but there is a world of difference between enduring cold, however poorly one is clothed, when one is in a state of physical fitness and can also move, and enduring it, motionless, for hours, when in a state of physical shock.

After some time, however, the door opened and in the dim light I saw a man standing, in military uniform. Whoever he was, he did not utter a word, but suddenly turned, and the door was closed again. Even this momentary sight of another human being was a stimulus to action, and despite the fact that my hands were fastened behind my back, and one of the handcuffs bit into my flesh, I contrived to roll over and crawl to the door. Then, by dint of immense effort, I kicked against it, and when all this hard work had restored some feeling of life to my body I reminded myself that I was an athlete and that if any prisoner could overcome the indignity of his bonds, it should be possible for me to do so. At the cost of intense effort and pain I succeeded in rising to my feet. I leaned against the wall gathering my strength, when the door opened again and I saw a silhouette of another man in front of me. My heart leapt—foolishly, for he had not opened the door to come to me as man to man but had pushed it at me as if to crush something inhuman and hateful. Raising his boot, he kicked me savagely in the lower abdomen and sent me reeling against the wall behind me and then on to the ground, with all my weight on my injured

arm. My head and shoulders crashed on the stone floor, and darkness blacked out everything.

I do not know how long I lay before the first glimmering of consciousness returned to me. Then I still sprawled helpless, too weak even to complain—not that there was anybody to complain to. To add to my bitterness there crept over me the sense that after all I had nobody to blame but myself. Why should I hate Stalin's régime and not expect to be crushed by it? And who had told me to get up, to kick at the door, to shout? There must be order, I reflected, so naturally public authorities liked people who were submissive and grateful to them; as for the others, was it a wonder if at times they were shot down like disobedient dogs so that there should be peace, and uniformity of thought, and no trouble?

By then it must have been the morning after the day I had refused to sign the statement, but I think that another twelve hours passed before I began to feel alive and emerged from the abyss of resignation. I have the impression that I did not come to by myself, and that there was some kind of medical intervention. When I became once more aware of myself I was no longer in irons. Every bone, every sinew in my body was aching increasingly. I heard two people moving somewhere out of the range of vision of my right eye (I could see nothing with my left), and I understood that they were talking about what to do with me. Then they went away. Little by little I became fully conscious. I was in agony. From the centre of my wounded eye dazzling waves of pain seemed to radiate, shattering my skull.

The door opened again, fresh air came into the room. I was helped to my feet and given a tablet of some sort of analgesic. "Can you stand by yourself?" a voice asked. "Then come with me." I dragged myself through the door. It was dark. The man led me round the corner of some large building and I saw the dim outline of a motor car. From somewhere nearby came the ragged whistle and short breath of a shunting locomotive. Where was I? Certainly not outside the NKVD annexe of the Academy—there was no marshalling yard near us. I never discovered in what building they had held me.

The guard offered me a cigarette and I took it. What balm that was! I was not aware of hunger; perhaps they had somehow fed me artificially.

"Climb in," said the man in a low voice.

But life was steadily returning to me and with it came a pang of animal fear. Were they taking me away to shoot me? My suspicion

was unfounded as I learned afterwards, but I had no reason to trust them. I held back. "Who are you?" I felt angry that my voice was so weak and uncertain.

"Does that matter to you?"

"No," I mumbled. "But where am I . . . ? Where are you taking me?"

"Inside, quick, and don't ask questions," he gripped my arm and tried to hustle me into the car. "I'm taking you home, and it doesn't matter where you are."

At such moments one is controlled by whatever is strongest in one, not necessarily by reason. What shot up in me together with my instinctive caution was the sense of insufferably injured human pride—perhaps it was my Caucasian blood and upbringing, for our ancient culture gives us an intense, inbred feeling of personal dignity. I drew back sharply and tried feebly to return the kick which this guard or some other had given me hours before at the cellar door. But I was so weak and unsteady that my boot merely brushed his breeches. This was enough, however, for him to fling himself on me and savage me. I had tried to lay hands on the NKVD. I was only half alive and clearly powerless to offer the slightest real resistance, yet he rained blow after blow on me, with fists and boots; other guards ran to his assistance, and once again I was flung—not carried, flung—into the cooling-off cell.

What happened in the ensuing weeks I know, not from my own memory, but from what I was told by Dr. Maltuzovsky. The day after I was put back in the cellar, the Duty Doctor of the Special Branch saw me and ordered my removal to the Garrison Polyclinic, where I was put into a closed ward reserved for hopeless cases. Dr. Maltuzovsky found that apart from my actual wound, incipient blood poisoning and traces of frostbite, I was suffering from such severe exposure that he gave me only a day or two to live. He regarded me as of experimental interest rather than as someone who could be nursed back to life. The Sister who looked after me, Lidia Merkulov, told me that morning after morning, the Doctor, passing on his round, would ask: "Well, Sister, is that fellow still holding out?" And morning after morning she would reply that, extraordinary as this was, I was still just breathing.

Treatment after treatment was tried and I was given more than one blood transfusion, only to relapse again. My left arm and my left leg were paralysed; my right shin-bone was badly splintered, and this was another centre of a gangrenous infection. I lost the skin of these limbs, but in time new skin replaced it, and I lived.

When spring came I took a decided turn for the better. My magnificent constitution had, after all, made recovery possible. The day Merkulova first showed me my face in a hand-mirror I could not recognise the skull stretched with skin that stared at me out of sunken eyes. I was still so weak that I could only whisper, and I could not move even my sound leg. I felt as if I had ceased to exist as a human being, for I had no knowledge of what had happened to me since I was thrown back into the cellar, and I had almost completely lost touch with the outer world. Were my friends perhaps afraid that my doctor or my nurse were secret agents? If so, they were quite wrong. No two people ever deserved better the name *human*, and it was to them I owed such hold on life as I had managed to regain.

One friend, however, did visit me. Those who know the First Moscow Military Hospital will remember the steeply sloping garden at one side of it. Through this garden, one moonless night, with the connivance of Sister Merkulov, came Katya Okman! What a distance we had both travelled since that night in Dzhaudzhikau when we parted! Her father, still clinging to his idealist views of what Communism should be, had at last been despatched for life to a Siberian Concentration Camp, and Katya herself had led a miserable existence of hardship and poverty. In all these years we had only exchanged a few letters and met once or twice. For a long time I had remained bitter against her. But my two closest friends, Fedotov and Belinsky, who knew about our affair, had seen more of her and had been able to appreciate her real qualities of mind and heart better than I had. It was Belinsky who told her of my misfortune, but it was Katya herself who at last overcame all obstacles to reach me in my sealed-off ward.

Her sudden visit was an indescribable surprise and delight to me. I was too weak even to take her hand, but she smoothed my face with her fingers as she bent over me. "Grisha," she said, "do you know who I am?" "Of course I do, Katya," I whispered. "My dear," she said, "you can't speak yet!" I could see that my condition frightened her, even though I was so much better.

She herself had grown much thinner in these years; her expression was more mature, but I found her as lovely as she had ever been to me. As we talked in whispers, she wept—I think it was not only for me or for her father but for the whole of our generation; our meeting brought back to us memories of that summer, only ten years past, when the world had seemed to us so full of hope.

She could not stay for more than half-an-hour. Sister Merkulov

warned her that it was time for her to go. I thought with horror of the risk she had taken for me—not only might she have been caught, but in our ward of rejects there were patients dying of infectious diseases. She put her arms round me and kissed me, pressing my undamaged hand to her own face. Our common suffering and disillusionment had brought us closer together than a purely erotic love affair could ever have done. Before she went, she opened her handbag and brought out a small piece of chocolate—in those times this was a princely gift. She was not able to visit me again, but Sister Merkulov kept us in touch, and from time to time there came other touching little presents which I knew represented much sacrifice—more chocolates, or cigarettes, or a miraculous, out-of-season apple.

Later, other friends managed to reach me and showed me their loyalty. First among them was Belinsky, for Volodya Fedotov, worn out by hardship and privation, had died some months since. Belinsky himself, expelled from the Party, lived as a pariah, in abject poverty, with no hope of improving his position—for though many people have good jobs without being Party members, none of them are *former* Party members; no institution would dare to employ such men, for fear of drawing upon itself the attentions of the political police. Although an outcast, Belinsky not only contrived to keep in touch with me through Sister Merkulov, but succeeded through our tenuous yet tough network of Revolutionary Democrats, in inspiring efforts to improve my conditions and to get the charges against me dropped.

At such times brave men reveal themselves. It had been the distasteful task of Colonel-General Todorsky, then C.O. of the Academy, to sign the order expelling me from the College. Yet it was he who now took my case—the case of an Enemy of the People—before Air Marshal Alksnis. And when I was at last discharged from the Military Hospital, he and Alksnis, acting as the willing instruments of others (whose names I cannot give) saw to it that I was sent to the Rehabilitation Institute in Sevastopol where my shattered leg was rebuilt and my health gradually restored. Nor was I the only one whom these men, and others at the top level of the Air Force, literally saved in those days. They themselves were in extreme danger, but their own increasing insecurity never made them cease from being men in the full meaning of the word.

What made their position particularly difficult was that they were surrounded by people like Petrikovsky, Kiselyov, Leiman—who never for a moment relaxed their efforts to build up their own career on the ruin of those of others. Perhaps it is difficult for Western

readers to understand how these small fry succeeded in destroying guiltless men, many of high standing, and why these great chiefs were powerless to prevent them. Indeed, it is almost impossible to understand without having lived through that nation-wide hysteria. For anyone frankly to oppose the informers or struggle against arbitrary condemnations meant to court his own destruction. The whole essence of the terror was that men were destroyed on suspicion backed by hysteria induced and encouraged by the régime. It should also be remembered that not all the informers were small fry. Since the Academy was largely a post-graduate and research centre, many of the students were people of the age and position of Petrikovsky, rank P-10; if such a person chose to shout accusations sufficiently loudly there was little chance of his victim coming through unscathed.

But to go back to my own affairs in the spring of 1935. Discharged from the Military Hospital, I dragged myself to the Academy. My clothes hung on me, my right leg was almost unusable. I walked with a crutch stick, I had no money, no food, and no means of getting food except through my friends. Many people turned away as I passed and nobody spoke to me except Leiman, who laughed at my lameness.

I went up to my room to get my belongings, and there I found what close contact was maintained between the Military Academy and the Special Department: I was immediately asked to attend at the same place of enquiry where my trials had begun. But the NKVD man who saw me there was new. They were indeed all new. It is a grim commentary on the period that, as I learnt later, all those who had previously dealt with me were themselves already under lock and key.

The middle-aged man who now saw me was polite; he informed me that I was forbidden to tell anybody what had happened to me and particularly to say that I had suffered ill-treatment. I protested. It was ridiculous. My left arm was in a sling, my left eye was still half-closed, I could not walk without a crutch.

"Here is the official diagnosis of your case," he said. He handed me a scrap of paper on which was written: "Tokae, G. A., suffering from phlegmatic inflammation of the blood, has received prophylactic treatment and is still affected by acute arthritis in right leg and left arm." "Sign here," he said, putting before me a copy of the instructions. He then told me that my case was still not closed, but for health reasons could be deferred.

What was I to do? Go to Indrikson? Volodarsky? Neither of

them was any longer in office. Go to Alksnis? I could never have reached him. Hor'kov had been arrested. Ordzhonikidze? It had been difficult enough to get to him before, when I had a Party card to help me; it would be unthinkable now.

The obvious place to go to was the Political Department of the Academy. Whoever was in office, that was where they ought to know about my case, and where I ought to begin taking the first steps towards my rehabilitation.

Here, as in the Special Branch, all those I had dealt with before had been arrested or transferred. To add to my difficulty, the Kremlin, itself apparently alarmed by the speed with which the terror was spreading, had issued fresh orders for less slapdash investigations. As a result there were enormous arrears of work. I also realised that my case was no longer the topical sensation at the Academy; it was vastly overshadowed by the "bigger game" which had fallen since my arrest. A minor detail which interested me greatly was that the Department had received two memoranda from outside the Academy showing that my silly anecdote about the leaders had not been my own invention, but had originated somewhere else.

To be fair, the Political Department were considerate to me, and it was their advice that I should continue my efforts to secure at least partial rehabilitation of my political status.

Encouraged by this, I withdrew temporarily to the obscurity of the civilian Students' Hostel. Here a girl called Zarubina fed me for the first few days. With her help and that of Saprykin, a student, and Budanov, a plumber, I managed to exist.

Both were old friends of mine. Budanov was not a Party member. Saprykin was a Ukrainian of simple origin who would lament: "What times we live in, Grisha, what monstrous Socialism!" He liked to talk of storming the Kremlin as the people of Paris had stormed the Bastille. "Our time will come," Budanov would say more calmly, "our time will come." He believed that his country was ill-fated. "In Tatar times we were surrounded by barbarians, now it is we who drink each other's blood. Look at Cheplakov" (a worker of our acquaintance); "never raised a finger, but they knocked out all his teeth before they let him go. Then they told him he had a clean bill. That won't put his teeth back."

Such talk was only possible in the closest circle of sworn and tried friends. We had to admit that we had been taken quite unprepared. The Stalinists, on the other hand, had evidently long been preparing some such blood bath. There had not been the slightest

possibility of successful resistance. Now all anyone could do was to lie low, or, if he were in a position of importance, to try to save or alleviate the lot of those who were caught up in the slaughter.

For my own part, I had to take advantage of the lull in the proceedings against me—it might be over at any moment—to press for my rehabilitation.

I waited in lobbies, I wrote application after application, I was kicked out again and again like a stray mongrel, but I knew that persistence was my only chance. The least hint of giving up, of resigning myself to being outside the Party, would be taken as a sign that I was not sure of myself, that perhaps I even welcomed my expulsion—a charge as dangerous as that of being a “White Guard”.

To these considerations was added one which, however fantastic, weighed more heavily with me than all the rest. As my health returned I began to think that perhaps after all it was not out of the question to work for liberty from *inside* the Party. There were still many decent men and women in the Party: was it not a duty to join them? An army oppositionist (in my next book I will call him “Comrade X”) in a very senior position had more than once insisted that, however wild and arbitrary the despotism became, the right way was to work from within.

That is how we saw things in 1935. It is easy *now* to say that we were wrong. It is always easy to judge afterwards. If we were wrong, it is up to younger people to learn by our mistakes. But who can be sure that we were wrong *then*? We were not the only factors in the situation. If others had developed differently we might have been proved right.

At last, in my efforts towards rehabilitation, I reached the Supervision Commission of the Central Committee of the Party. Here the answer was simple and discouraging; I was told the Party could get on without me. This looked like the final defeat, but I immediately wrote personally to Ordzhonikidze, and to Osepyan. One or both of these letters must have had some effect, for I was now summoned to the Party Commission of the Supreme Political Administration of the Red Army and informed that Yemelyan Yaroslavsky had ordered my case to be reviewed. And now began another period of Boards and Assemblies and new demands for “self-criticism”.

The rank-and-file Party Branch which had originally expelled me refused to support my demand for reinstatement. So did the Central Party Bureau of the Aeronautical Technical Faculty, under

the chairmanship of Petrikovsky; it even went further and made new charges against me.

Then came a sitting of the Garrison Party Commission. "Well, Tokaev," said the Chairman, a swarthy obese giant, "you have already been expelled from the Party three times, and here you are, still asking for reinstatement. That must mean you consider the earlier decisions wrong. Please tell this Commission why you think so."

Before I could answer I was forestalled by the Regimental Commissar, Gasoyan, a lecturer in dialectical and historical materialism. He objected that the Chairman had formulated the matter wrongly. It was the duty of a Party Commission not merely to expel and punish, but also, if necessary, to assist a man to be a full member of the community. This was indeed a courageous declaration, and I was moved by it, especially since it came from a man I scarcely knew.

Next spoke Divisional Commissar Fomichev, head of the Department of Marxism-Leninism. He said that, quite independently of whether or not I was reinstated, he could not agree with the formulation of the charge on which I had been expelled. If we were going to label people "enemies of the people" and "White Guards" for any trifle, we would soon exhaust our political lexicon, and there would be no terms left to use for real enemies of the people and real White Guards. This was just what Indrikson would have said. (Where Indrikson was I still did not know.)

But now a Major Commissar, whose name I forget, said that not only those who fought the State with arms should be described as White Guards, but also any man who tried to put a spoke in the wheel of Socialist construction, and therefore I had been charged rightly. It was the Party's duty to demonstrate the monolithicity of the Party and the State and the mercilessness with which they would root out their enemies.

Thus from the outset matters took a sharp turn; there was open conflict between two extreme points of view—a marked change from the customary unanimity of Party Commissions.

"On what do you base your application for reinstatement?" the Chairman asked me.

"In the first place," I said, "I request a change in the formulation of the reasons for which I was expelled, because I cannot agree that I should be classified as an enemy of the people or a White Guard. I therefore request the Commission either to prove that I am a White Guard, or to reject the charge, after which it should be possible to consider whether I should be reinstated."

He then asked me how I myself would describe my act, and I insisted that I had committed no crime. The difficulty was that to prove my case I needed to prove to them the complete harmlessness of my silly story, and even this high level Commission could not allow me to repeat what I had actually said. At the very suggestion the Chairman looked scandalised. How, he asked his colleagues, could they think of reinstating a man who "even tries to use this sitting of a Party Commission for the dissemination of counter-revolutionary and White-Guardist propaganda". They actually voted on the question, and decided by 9 to 2 that the incriminating words might not be repeated, lest they should influence some other person.

My defence was in fact laid down for me; all I had a choice of saying was: "I engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda and consider myself a criminal," or "I am an enemy of the people", or "I am a White-Guardist". To none of these formulations would I agree, though doubtless the outcome of the meeting would have been quite different had I said something like this: "Comrades, my guilt towards the Party is boundless, I have committed the most serious of crimes. I found myself in the camp of enemies, traitors and White Guards. But now I have realised the depth of my errors, I have understood my crime, and this I owe to the great-heartedness of our Party. I solemnly assure the Party, the Government and Comrade Stalin that if I am given the opportunity I shall spare no effort, not even my life, to redeem my fault by faithful labour, by courageous struggle for the general line, by a merciless attitude to any and every anti-Soviet excess. I cannot conceive of myself without the Party, I cannot live without the Party. . . ."

As it was, not only was my expulsion confirmed by the Commission, but I was warned never again to apply for reinstatement.

However, no man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for anything. So to this new reverse I opposed a new resoluteness, and in the end, with the help of several people of influence, I succeeded in getting a hearing from the Party Supervisory Commission of the Military District of Moscow. This time Osepyan and a number of others insisted on my adopting a more conciliatory attitude. Hence, before this Commission I actually did make a "self-critical speech". I went so far as to admit that I had chosen a most unseemly time and place to tell my anecdote, and I condemned my silence at the first assembly at which I was charged in so far as that silence lent itself to being misinterpreted as a demonstration of scorn for the Party's authority. I still omitted, however,

to dub myself an Enemy of the People, or a White Guard or a counter-revolutionary and, in answer to a concrete question as to what lay behind my "anti-Soviet anecdote", I gave an explanation which was altogether unsatisfactory to the Commission, for every man on the Commission wanted me to state who *had* prompted my act, while I repeated time and again that I alone was responsible for it. I assured them that I had overheard the story by chance in a public place and had then enlarged on it myself. Asked if I had told it outside the Academy, I insisted that I had not, though this was not true.

I am not sure that this Commission, composed of high level political officers, did not know just how far I was, or was not, speaking the truth; in the event, they confirmed the initial decision to expel me from the Party.

This appeared to be the final stroke. It seemed that I must now abandon all thought of being reinstated, and with it, all thought of continuing my studies at the Zhukovsky Academy. Even I could think of nothing further to do, but to my astonishment, a week later I was summoned before another meeting of the same Commission which, this time, included Osepyan and Rusanov. Once again I was asked to "admit my errors", and I repeated almost word for word what I had said the week before. After some further questions, I was asked to withdraw. Forty minutes later Rusanov came out, took my hand in both of his and whispered, "Reinstated, my dear fellow." Then Osepyan strode past me with a friendly wave of his hand and the swift remark: "You've got through this time, but do be more cautious and sensible in future."

The written decision of the Commission placed on record that I was accused of telling an anti-Soviet story—there was no longer any mention of White Guard or Enemy of the People. Then, after a lot of "taking into account" of this and that, came the "organisational conclusions": "*First*, to reinstate Tokaev as a Party member; *secondly*, to reprimand him severely with final warning and entry in his personal dossier; *thirdly*, to warn Tokaev that at the least suggestion of any further anti-Soviet or anti-Party acts he will be automatically expelled; *fourthly*, to make it obligatory on the Zhukovsky Academy Political Department to test Tokaev in practical Party-political work; *fifthly*, to request the Command of the Military Air Force to reconsider the matter of reinstating Tokaev as a cadet of the Academy. . . ." Shortly after this Alksnis and Todorsky signed the order which fully reinstated me as a Zhukovsky Academy cadet. Once again I was a complete human

being, one whom others might call *tovarishch* without endangering themselves.

This, however, was not all. As soon as this became possible, Todorsky and his political deputy Smolensky treated me like brothers. As I have already said, they lost no time in getting me transferred to the Sechenov Rehabilitation Institute in Sevastopol for a month's treatment, and Todorsky personally assured me that if necessary he would extend the period for another month. "And so," he said, in his northern accent with its broad O's, "I tell you, off you go and get fit again, old man, and don't you show yourself here till they've given you back your arms and legs." He called his own chauffeur and had him pack my bag and drive me to the station. And so I left, with a new zest for life and moved to the core of my being with gratitude to that outstanding officer.

When autumn came, I returned to my desk. I had lost the best part of a year, but relentless work, assisted by my retentive memory, soon enabled me to catch up.

DEATH OF A REVOLUTION

NATURALLY, A single case is not enough to illustrate the reign of terror correctly, but though each case differed in detail from the next, mine was, by and large, typical of many thousands. Neither my "crime" nor my circumstances were exceptional, and if I was lucky in my connections with high ranking officers, this was also not unique. Besides, as I have shown, there was little these people could do for their protégés except now and then assist their efforts by tipping the balance at a crucial moment.

But while my experience shows something of the life of Soviet citizens in those dark days, the régime befuddled many both at home and abroad, partly by its brilliant moves and partly by its fluctuations.

For it must not be forgotten that the régime itself was the victim of terror. There is no doubt that Stalin was in a state of acute hysteria over several weeks, and that life at the Kremlin became chaotic, a nightmare of uncertainty and of panic switches from ruthlessness to caution and back to ruthlessness.

It was fortunate that there still were, in Stalin's entourage, a number of experienced old revolutionaries and level-headed statesmen.¹ The key posts in the Central Committee of the Party were

¹ Such were the Second Chairman of the Central Executive Committee (the Government), and First Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, Politbureau candidate Grigory Ivanovich Petrovsky, the Secretary of the Central Executive Committee and Member of the Central Committee of the Party Avel Safronovich Yenukidze, the Deputy-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and Member of the Politbureau Vlas Yakovlevich Chubar, the Deputy-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and Chairman of the State Planning Commission Valerian Ivanovich Mezhlauk, People's Commissar of Communications Alexey Ivanovich Rykov, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan Faizulla Hodzhaev, the People's Commissar of Heavy Industry and Politbureau Member Grigory Konstantinovich Ordzhonikidze, Deputy-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and Politbureau Member Valerian Vladimirovich Kuibyshev, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Caucasian Federative Republic G. Musabekov, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Belorussia A. G. Chervyakov, and a great number of others.

still held by such members of the "old guard" as Yenukidze, Kuibyshev, Ordzhonikidze and Petrovsky. These men still had some authority and the courage to attempt to use it. Without their moderating influence, things might easily have been a great deal worse.

It is not that there was any disagreement within the oligarchy as to the danger of counter-revolutionary tendencies and the need to repress them. But there was a profound difference between the vigilance of the personally unambitious veterans and Stalin's rising pathological hatred and fear of all opposition to himself, of all criticism, of all dissension. For a time after the assassination of Kirov this difference was submerged in the shortlived general panic which released the reign of terror. But it revived when the moderates began to point out that the policy of the "iron hand" was itself creating dangers.

Stalin and his closer associates saw the force of this. Cynical and scornful of what ordinary people thought, Stalin was acutely aware of the need to placate them. He was impatient of this need and preferred to reach his ends by his own system of combined pressures—pressure of propaganda combined with pressure of regimentation. But until this system was sufficiently built up he was prepared to combine the "iron hand" with the "handing out of honey cakes".

This is what explains the seeming paradoxes of that time: the period of repression was also the period of apparent relaxations and reforms. Perhaps the cleverest move was the creation of the Drafting Commission of the famous new democratic Constitution. The Commission absorbed and silenced many oppositionists and the Constitution was hailed by "progressives" abroad as the fruit of a "new civilisation". Few people in the West grasped in 1935 that the reforms and the relaxations were the window-dressing behind which Stalin and his men were settling down to their real work: the annihilation of the political fruits of the Revolution.

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The first "honey cake" was handed out on 8th December, only a week after the assassination. Two days earlier the press and radio had announced the summary execution of scores of leading personalities. A sense of insecurity and of doom hung over the capital, and in this darkness flickered rumours of the insecurity of the régime. But now a new communiqué announced the abolition of the rationing of basic foodstuffs. The public, long disgruntled by the food restrictions, felt a cloud had lifted. There was a new sense of

freedom in domestic life; not that food became more plentiful, but it was hard not to draw the conclusion that, if the Government could take this step, "things could not be so bad after all."

Next day brought the announcement—aimed at a more sophisticated public—of a triumph in foreign politics. For years the U.S.S.R. had been largely isolated, a distrusted country. But negotiations with France had been in progress for some time and now it was possible to bring the Franco-Soviet Treaty of trade and mutual aid out of the bag. How pleasing this was even to the ordinary citizen, conditioned in his view of world events by the Kremlin's propaganda! Was the treaty not a proof that the country was becoming stronger and more stable? Was it not a proof that the stories of its insecurity were hostile inventions? And in that case, were not the police right after all to take strong measures against those who were spreading them?

Abroad it was now possible to silence criticism and pooh-pooh the rumours of a reign of terror. Who but ill-wishers could believe such things at a time when food rationing had just been abolished and a foreign alliance had been formed?

* * * * *

One of the greatest weaknesses of the Soviet régime was the centrifugal tendency of the subordinate republics. This was known as "bourgeois nationalism", a phenomenon which had been growing recently. The republics had preserved their national aspirations; and if things were going badly—if the Kremlin could not supply a sufficiency of manufactured goods—they believed that independence would bring greater prosperity; but if, owing to new capital investment and improved distribution, things went better, the local heads dreamed of self-sufficiency. The problem of diverting such ambitions into safer channels had been pressing for some time.

On 12th December the whole press came out with a fanfare in honour of the anniversary of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. This went on for four more days, with particular insistence in the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Caucasus. The basic argument was that nowhere except in the Soviet system, where they received fraternal assistance and support from the Great-Russian People, could the constituent republics' flourish and develop their national characteristics.

To mark the occasion, P. P. Postyshev, who was a candidate of the Kremlin Politbureau, was made Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukraine, and three other Ukrainians (Chubar,

Kossyor and Petrovsky) joined the Kremlin Politbureau. Central rule from Moscow? Use your eyes, observe the new trends. Just look at the part the Ukrainians are playing now!

The propaganda machine worked full time. Those who directed it—the top level officials in all branches of administration—were being decimated by new arrests. But on 17th December was published and broadcast a resolution of the Moscow Party Activists supporting the leaders of the Party and the Government who were admirable for their wisdom and their closeness to the people's hearts.

There had been growing discontent in the army and members of the officers' corps were being liquidated right and left. Now this purge was made to seem the inevitable concomitant of a democratisation of the High Command.

On 22nd December was formed the new Military Council, so numerous that it was almost a military parliament. Seventy-six marshals, generals and other senior officers sat on it; they were to meet under the chairmanship of the People's Commissar of Defence and discuss their problems "frankly and openly".

Not only did this measure appease discontent, it served another purpose of the Kremlin by inducing these military chiefs to compromise themselves by talking too freely at the Council's sittings. Perhaps because the spacious, outspoken spirit of the October Revolution was still a living memory, it was possible for people to be fooled into believing that the earlier, comradely climate of discussion was to be restored. The Council acted as a sort of sieve; twenty-three men were shot within less than two years of the day they were appointed; today only one out of every six of its original members is alive. This indicates the real proportion of Stalinists among the original seventy-six!

* * * * *

The 24th December was suitably chosen for a lavish gift to millions of peasants. When their holdings were originally grouped into collective farms, the State had issued loans to the collective farmers which had since become a millstone round the farmers' necks. Now, all loans issued before 1933 and not yet repaid were simply wiped out. "Such benevolence only Comrade Stalin has shown," said the papers. "Such a step could only have been taken in the Soviet Union where the workers are the ceaseless and supreme concern of the Party and the Government."

The new year saw the formation of a Kremlin Commission for

the subdivision of administrative areas. The existing areas were pronounced to be too large, they were so "cumbersome" that they "hindered the development of Soviet democracy".

In fact, some of them—along the Volga, in the Northern Caucasus, at Kirov, at Gorki—though they did not correspond to previous national or ethnic groupings, were developing a local consciousness, almost the rudiments of a national physiognomy. It was feared that if this tendency were allowed to increase, they might wish at some future time to throw off the controlling hand of Moscow and this perhaps at a moment when they were less easy to deal with.

In mid-January came the new elections to the local Soviets. Into every family and every home, throughout the length and breadth of the Union, Party and Comsomol propagandists went canvassing. Their themes were simple: the U.S.S.R. was supremely fortunate in possessing Stalin and Molotov, and the Party policy was all-wise. The reign of terror was not aimed at decent folk but at those who wished to overthrow the protectors of the decent folk, the people who terminated rationing and who cancelled the collective farmers' debts.

To ensure the victory of decent folk, voting was to be by public declaration. This would make such enemies of the régime as might still be at large think twice before they revealed themselves by casting their votes against the Stalinist candidates. This, said propaganda, was the proof that the elections were free and the régime democratic.

The Stalinists carried away a formidable victory, which was followed by triumphant congresses of the "freely" elected councils.

And on 6th February, Molotov, speaking for the plenum of the Central Committee, first launched the idea of a new Constitution. The people of the Soviet Union, he said, had merited such freedoms as were not even dreamt of in the capitalist countries.

"Democracy" was marching forward to the waving of banners and the admiration, if not the envy, of the "progressives" of the world. At that time those who might have turned the Soviet Union into a genuine democracy, or who were merely suspected unjustly of believing in it, were being ferreted out and exterminated. On 16th February came the decree which established the Central Commission for the drafting of the Constitution, and the propaganda chiefs saw to it that rumours filled the country of the idea having originated with Stalin himself; from end to end of the Union it was whispered: "Stalin has said, 'The answer to disaffection is not less liberty but more liberty.'" The demand for human rights which had

risen inevitably with the wider spread of literacy was to be met with the biggest lie of all.

Not only did observers abroad and the masses within the country take the lie at its face value, but so, to a tragic extent, did the opposition. It is easy to understand why. The composition of the Drafting Committee was a stroke of genius on Stalin's part: here sat representatives of non-Russian republics and here too sat the leaders of the oppositionists themselves!¹

Nothing could have done more to disarm the rank and file or at least to set them questioning. How could it be doubted that the Constitution would be democratic with such people as Bukharin working on it? Why, even the bourgeois nationalists had a practical, concrete assurance that their aspirations would at last be satisfied. And if the régime was indeed suffering a change of heart, could it be worth risking liberty and perhaps life to struggle against the oligarchs?

* * * * *

Round this "banner of the new age" propaganda wove many garlands.

Thus there suddenly arose a wave of interest in the Soviet Far East. To the average Moscow citizen, the Urals are a sort of natural eastern boundary; yet beyond them the Empire stretches eastward almost four times as far again. This enormous territory is a remote, legendary country—almost like a sort of Antarctic. Now it was asserted that its waste lands were flowering, owing to the achievements of the forces of progress organised by Stalin. The assertion was not easy to verify, and it explained why there had to be repression in the capital. No wonder that the foreign powers were envious of such great deeds; that was why their secret agents inside the country had multiplied.

¹ Chairman, I. V. Stalin—then: N. Aitakov (Turkestan), I. A. Akulov (Secretary of the VTZIK), A. S. Bubnov (People's Commissar of Education), N. I. Bukharin (leader of the one-time right-wing deviation), K. E. Voroshilov (People's Commissar of Defence), A. Y. Vyshinsky (State Prosecutor), I. M. Golodyel (Belorussia), A. S. Yenukidze, M. N. Yerbanov (Turkestan), A. A. Zhdanov (Leningrad), A. I. Ikramov (Turkestan), L. M. Kaganovich (Moscow), M. I. Kalinin (Chairman of Central Executive Committee of U.S.S.R.), P. A. Krasikov (RSFSR), N. V. Krylenko (People's Commissar of Justice), M. M. Litvinov, P. P. Liubchenko (Ukraine), L. Z. Mekhlis (Editor of *Pravda*), A. O. Mikoyan (Armenia), V. M. Molotov (Chairman of Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R.), G. Musabekov (Transcaucasia), G. I. Petrovsky (Ukraine), K. B. Radek (Editorial Board of *Pravda*), A. R. Rakhimbayev, E. D. Stasova, D. E. Sulimov (Chairman of Council of People's Commissars of RSFSR), I. S. Unschlicht (Industry), F. Hodzhaiyev (Turkestan), A. G. Chervijakov (Belorussia), V. Y. Chubar (Ukraine).

The Far East had its separately organised Red Army. Voroshilov, People's Commissar for Defence, staged a mass reception for its rank and file, and in many variations this "great lesson in Soviet democracy" was plugged to all other units of the Soviet forces.

* * * * *

In February was held the Second Congress of Collective Farmers. It was still only six weeks since the cancellation of the peasants' debts, and thousands of grateful simple folk from every climate and from every district, dressed in their brightest local costumes, came to Moscow for a lavish holiday. All it cost them was to sit through long speeches (fully half of them did not understand Russian), clap when others clapped and vote when others voted. There was no need to rack your brains—just be carried by the buoyancy achieved through the relentless, nation-wide unanimity of the propaganda organs—and by the afflatus of the sensation that you were at last a somebody.

Over the huge assembly towered the arena and the long, flower-bedecked table at which sat the Kremlin leaders. It was said that when enthusiasm was at its height and the peasants could not stop clapping him, Stalin leaned over to his crony Voroshilov and whispered something, smiling; his words were interpreted as the expression of his "ceaseless concern for us" but were, in fact, the Russian proverb: "Muddled heads make restless hands."

And now came the crowning stroke. Rykov and Bukharin were known as the "peasants' advocates" and their Right-wing Deviation had been largely a protest against Stalin's peasant policy. Now Rykov was made People's Commissar for Communications. Seeing his photograph in *Pravda*, people marvelled (as they were meant to) at the growing liberalism of the régime. Was Bukharin too deceived? Yet he himself had told the story of how Stalin said to him at a Politbureau meeting: "Nikolay Ivanovich, the peasants love you, so the Party suggests you address the Farmers' Congress and prove to them that you agree with the Politbureau." Astoundingly, Bukharin accepted. Could he possibly have believed that the régime was really changing, softening? Or that his concession was a means to getting real concessions in return? His act was a betrayal, for he knew that if he addressed the Congress at all, there was nothing he could do except offer a defence of the régime.

This he did brilliantly, for he was a splendid orator. Mounting and leaving the tribune amid acclamations, he struck a blow at the opposition which did incalculable harm. Even the most resolute

opponents of Stalin were shaken, some infected with pessimism and uncertainty as to the strength of the movement, others deluded into the belief that Bukharin's influence in the régime was growing, or that his assistance in drafting the new statutes for collective farms would protect the peasants' interests.

After I came out of hospital I delivered to Bukharin a resolution prepared by my comrades, which described his action as "renegade, capitulatory and treacherous". His only answer was a morose silence.

He had urged us to think for ourselves and to try to bring our influence to bear on public matters; now he himself had turned against the views, the faith he had stirred up. He would like to have regained our confidence, but it was too late. He had allowed himself to be broken. As a political figure he was on the run. The inevitable ending was already in sight. Soon he was to be arrested, charged with a crime he had never committed, and shamefully put to death.

"Learn by my errors," Bukharin had said when I handed him our resolution, "and bear in mind that Stalin always has a dirty trick up his sleeve." Alas, there were too many errors for us to learn from, and we had to look for more reliable models on which to shape our lives than this intelligent but weak man who made so puny a statesman.

For what we were up against was no ordinary politician temporarily in charge of affairs, but a colossus who with diabolical cleverness profited by every mistake of his enemies and who, in the course of 1935, was to build himself up into a deified figure of a stature until then undreamt of in the modern world.

To explain the effect of his mere presence on his followers I can only describe it as a psychological intoxication. To illustrate it I should like to relate the story of Commander Zabrodny.¹ In 1935 was held the first of the great May Day receptions for senior officers given by Stalin in the Kremlin. Neither the parades nor the parties on May Day or in November² are composed of ordinary soldiers or officers. As a former member of the teaching staff of the Zhukovsky Academy I have had much direct experience of the extreme caution observed in selecting from the various regiments and military academies the most brilliant and most reliable officers

¹ The name of this officer was curiously symbolic; the root verb, *Zabrodit*, means "to begin to ferment" and *Zabrodny* is an adjective used of an uncertain track, as through soft snow or shifting sand. Trans.

² The Revolution took place in October according to the old church calendar, and the celebrations are still known as those of the October Revolution, though by the calendar in public use it took place in November; it is always celebrated in November. Trans.

to make up the "army units" which are to parade in the Red Square. Similarly, the guests at the receptions, which have become an accepted feature of the celebrations, are checked and counter-checked and checked again. This is what enabled Stalin to "hobnob with ordinary folk", even while the reign of terror was still in progress.

Zabrodny was a trusted Party member and a leading, handpicked, top cream specimen of the Soviet officers' corps. He was not a raw young man from the back of beyond, but an intelligent, well-educated, polished Soviet gentleman, a model—on all normal occasions—of polite, civilised, responsible behaviour. That was how he came to be invited to the May Day party at the Kremlin.

Champagne, vodka and Caucasian wines flowed at the party. But the principal wine in circulation was Josef Vissarionovich Stalin himself. Simply dressed in his sombre, para-military tunic, he moved freely among his guests, drawing one or another of them aside and exchanging intimate small talk with him, a true Father among his people—except that the screening had seen to it that they were the people only in the most remote, symbolic sense.

But such moments with their great host sowed in the minds and hearts of the officers a devoted belief in Stalin's profound humanity, and set them ablaze with loyalty. In fact, they came away from such parties *psychologically drunk*.

Naturally this party, like others, lasted all night, and in the morning Zabrodny started for home at the hour when the ordinary Moscow folk are packed tight into trams on their way to work. The trams are like little trains, three coaches linked together, and when they have their full complement of passengers they do not stop at the halt. The tram Zabrodny wanted to board was full and obviously going to run on past the station. His head turned by the magic of the scene he had just left, Zabrodny leapt off the pavement on to the track, barred the way, drew his pistol and commanded the driver to halt.

The driver braked hard and halted. "What's the matter, Commander?" he cried.

"Nothing is the matter," shouted Zabrodny. "I only wanted to tell you that Stalin has just told me what a lad I am. Do you understand? Stalin himself! 'Zabrodny,' he said, 'you are a fine fellow,' and I want all Moscow to know it, I want to tell you. Stalin took me by the hand and he said, 'Zabrodny, you're a fine fellow'."

The driver, of course, failed to realise that Zabrodny was telling the truth, that this was literally what had just happened, that Stalin

had indeed taken him by the hand and flattered him. He thought Zabrodny was merely drunk with alcohol, and as he had a tram full of passengers and a time-table, he pushed the obstructing Commander aside and tried to drive on. Zabrodny then fired a wild shot at the driver, fortunately missing, followed this by trying to board the tram, but fell, and lost one leg under the wheels.

The astonishing sequel to this incident was that, while for less than this people in the Soviet Union are sent to prison, Zabrodny suffered nothing beyond the loss of his leg, and is today a well-known lecturer at the Zhukovsky Academy.

Such was the climate of 1935, a climate which apparently remains largely incomprehensible to the Western world. In the course of only a few months a violent change had convulsed men's minds. Only yesterday it still seemed that the experienced founders of the Revolution believed that policy and events could be affected by reason and discussion. Now, suddenly, it was devastatingly plain that such debate and free influence on policy was no longer possible and that over everything towered one personality, one will, one name—Stalin—"the steel man". The age of the Revolution was over, and the age of Stalin had begun.

APPENDIX

IT IS, AT BEST, only through mental inertia that the outer world still calls the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by the outlived name "Russia". The name originally given by the English to the country ruled by the princes of Moscow was Muscovy. Russia (in Russian *Rossia*, as distinct from *Rus*¹) was the name by which Muscovy, when it became imperialist, called itself. Russia is in fact only a part of the Soviet Union and the Russians only one out of the sixty-three nationalities and two hundred and two peoples officially recognised. In the springtime of the Revolution there was no apparent reason why these nations and peoples should not live together in equality and freedom; but the same Kremlin imperialist aspirations which concealed themselves under the Tsarist name "Russia" have infected the Soviet State and dissolved the very principles on which the Revolution was founded.

That the Caucasus was a victim of such aspirations was made inevitable by its natural riches. On another plane altogether, this land, by its very loveliness, fascinated and attracted the poets and playboys of the North. Russian elegant society followed in the train of the Russian armies, to disport itself and take the various mineral waters of the North Caucasian mountains.

How can I hope to describe the beauties of my native land? Here, in Southern latitudes, the granite masses of volcanic mountains are capped with snow above green valleys fabulous for their fertility. Here roam chamois, wild boars and bears, as well as the aurochs, the leopard and the tiger. Here Jason and his argonauts sought the Golden Fleece. Here, some say, the ancestor of cultivated wheat was first discovered. Here civilised government began in the fourth century B.C.

Underneath the surface of the smiling landscape lies immense mineral wealth. Some of this wealth has been discovered only recently, and the importance of all of it could only be estimated with the development of modern industry. But the Caucasus, with its precious mineral resources, its healing air, its curative springs and its legendary beauty, has been a lure to the Russian rulers for over two centuries. Even before this, as early as the reign of Ivan the

¹ *Rus* signifies the Russian people only, *Rossia* the expanding Russian state. Trans.

Terrible (1541-1564), it tempted them: its standard of living was in some ways higher than theirs, and beyond its mountains lay the fabulous Middle East.

Above the smiling valleys and the unseen treasures tower vast knife-edged mountains. To us these are symbolic of the virtues embodied in our traditional heroes, the *dzhigits*, who are consummate horsemen with boundless strength, courage and endurance, and lively, untamable gumption. These qualities have always been required of us, whether to defend our freedom or to remain unconquered in spirit even when our outward liberty is lost.

* * * * *

My parents were Ossetians; my wife too is an Ossetian. The Tokaevs are through and through a North Caucasian family, a clan settled compactly in and about the villages of Novy Uruk¹ along the river of that name.

This region lies along the northern slope of the Caucasian range, near our capital city of Dzhaudzhikau,² which on older maps is marked as Ordzhonikidze, and on still older ones as Vladikavkaz. These names of our capital tell something of its history. Vladikavkaz is a composite Russian name of the same sort as Vladivostok: the one means "Rule the East" (*vostok*—east); the other "Rule the Caucasus"! It was given to the city by the invading Russian generals in the eighteenth century. In the early days of the Revolution the name was changed to Ordzhonikidze in honour of the Bolshevik leader of Caucasian (Georgian) origin. Finally, by a decree of September, 1944, the Ossetian name Dzhaudzhikau was restored, for although still at heart true to the cause of their eventual liberation, the Ossetians had put first things first and, during the 1941-1945 war, turned all their energies to the defeat of the Nazi-Fascist invaders.

The Northern Ossetian Republic is one of several regions which, together, constitute the North Caucasus.³ The whole Caucasus is divided into two parts, even more sharply than France is separated from Spain, by one of the world's great mountain systems, the Caucasian range which runs almost in a straight line from the Black Sea to the Caspian. This huge wall is 465 miles long, and among its

¹ In Ossetian, Shecher.

² In Ossetian, Dzauzyqau or Dzhaudzhikau.

³ The others are Daghestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay and the Cossack region; Armenia, Azerbaydzhan and Georgia, which includes the territory of some 150,000 South Ossetians, constitute the South Caucasus (or Transcaucasia).

summits are the giant peaks of Mount Kazbek and Mount Elbruz, the highest mountain in Europe.¹ The passes linking the Northern and Southern parts—the Darial Highway which runs through Northern Ossetia and the Georgian Military Highway—are at the centre of the range and cross the mountains at an immense altitude.

In the highest part of the country, between Mounts Kazbek and Elbruz, there are crystalline rock strata of the greatest antiquity, overlaid with deep strata of glacial origin. Mounts Elbruz and Kazbek were still active volcanoes in quaternian times. Below the harsh upper slopes, the sides of the mountains are dense with vegetation. The pastures are short (grasses of up to nine inches) but exceptionally rich in protein and minerals; more than six thousand natural Caucasian plant species are known. Over all this pours the Southern sun, while below the surface are mineral deposits embedded in pre-Cambrian gneiss, crystalline granites, sandstones, and thick seams of hard coal. Some upper valleys no stranger is allowed to penetrate, and I doubt if even an unofficial Soviet traveller has passed this way in the past quarter of a century.

The road up the Darial Defile, celebrated by Lermontov, is famous all over the world for its beauty. It follows the course of the river Ardon, which is fed by many cataracts gushing from the mountain-face. Higher up, the defile widens into a considerable basin, where stands the finely-built modern town of Mizur. This is one of the U.S.S.R.'s most important centres of zinc, lead and silver production. Beyond Mizur lies Sadon, a still more important source of mineral production. Few, even in the Soviet Union, know what Sadon looks like. Here the mountain wall is pocked with openings, from which borings run horizontally into the Caucasian *massif*. I have been in most of these mines; their equipment is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. But perhaps the most astonishing achievement is the tunnel from Mizur to Sadon, the first section of a subterranean route planned to replace the passes over the mountains.

Beyond Sadon, the road ends suddenly in a small place called Nuzal, six thousand feet above sea level, over which towers the granite wall. This is the southern end of Northern Ossetia, and near it is one of the most remarkable health resorts in the Soviet Union, the Tseĭ Sanatorium, set among glaciers, where the air is so pure that "normal" human ailments do not exist.

The Caucasus is, indeed, both beautiful and rich—rich, disastrously for itself, in those resources which the Kremlin militarists lack on

¹ Mount Kazbek: 16,531 ft. Mount Elbruz has two peaks, one 18,356 ft., the other 18,480 ft.

their home ground and without which in the modern world a powerful Soviet Empire could not exist.

In Northern Ossetia alone forty auriferous districts are known, and there are considerable deposits of silver. At Darg-Kokh, Zamankul, Gizel and Dur-Dur hard coal can be mined on the surface, and there are thick seams to be bored below. In the past thirteen years new sources of petroleum have been found in Georgia, Azerbaydzhan, Dagestan, Cheshen-Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and the Karachay region, as well as further west. The Kuban-Black Sea petroleum belt alone is one hundred and fifty miles long. The present petroleum productivity of the North Caucasus is one-fifth of the Soviet total, and a considerable increase is planned for the future. There are rich exploitable reserves of natural gases, considerable deposits of oil shale, and nearly everywhere, but particularly in Dagestan, North Ossetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, there are also iron and other ores. The list of exploitable minerals includes manganese, chrome, titanium, wolfram, molybdenum, nickel, cobalt, antimony, mercury, kitchen salt, phosphorus compounds, pure sulphur, borates, aquamarine, asbestos, viterite, gypsum and cement! The Northern Caucasus occupies the second place in Soviet zinc production (the first place is held by Kazakhstan), while in addition to the Sadon mines twenty-two other sources of silver, zinc and lead have been found.

* * * * *

The first Russian promptings to conquer the North Caucasus showed in the middle of the sixteenth century, when hostility to its non-Russian neighbours became one of the pillars of Russia's state policy. The acquisition of the Crimea and the Ukraine seemed essential to the rulers of Muscovy, but this was unthinkable without first securing the North Caucasus. In 1547 the first blow was struck at the Tatar Khanate of Kazan; after this the advance was continued into the Lower Volga Basin and into the Caucasus. After setbacks under Peter the Great, expansion southwards was resumed under Catherine II, who for twenty-three years was almost incessantly at war with Turkey, with the Northern Caucasus and the Crimea, as well as with Poland and the Balkans.

In the eyes of Russian "patriots" these wars were anything but "acquisitive"; but through them Muscovy seized the Black Sea shore from the Kuban to the Dnieper. And did not Catherine the Great, anticipating Karl Marx's description of the North Caucasus as the "knees" of the Russian Empire, write to General de Medem

in 1771: "The subordination of this region is of prime interest to Russia," adding that "no expense was to be spared" to foster internecine wars between the Caucasian peoples as this would greatly alleviate the Russians' task? Pursuing this policy of *divide et impera*, General Potemkin, in his own words, strove "to maintain constant feuds between these mountain folk, helping the weaker and preventing those who might become dangerous from getting strong".

Nothing shocks contemporary Russian "patriots" more than the claim that there is anything in common between Stalinism and Tsarism. Yet Catherine's policy and tactics in the Caucasus are precisely those which the Kremlin oligarchy have pursued in that region since 1921.

For a Caucasian to dwell on this is inevitable. Neither the early attitude of my generation of Caucasians towards Bolshevism, nor our later attitude towards Stalinism, can be understood without a knowledge of the bloodstained thread which runs through our common history with Russia.

In 1567 Ivan IV established the Fortress of Terki at the mouth of the River Terek. Peter the Great seized almost the whole western coast of the Caspian Sea. Lost under Anne, the mouth of the Terek was regained by the treaties of Resht (1732) and Gandzh (1735), and the first step was made to the conquest of Kabarda. The town of Mozdok was founded in 1763, and the close of the eighteenth century saw the establishment of the Kizlier Cordon of fortresses.

In 1768 Stepan Vonyavin made a geological survey of Northern Ossetia, to prospect for zinc, lead and silver and to examine the possibility of setting the Ossetians and the Kabardinians at loggerheads. In 1804 General Tsitsianov, known as "The Brute", issued the order: "The Ossetians are to be punished and slaughtered without mercy, all their homes are to be burned to the ground and the survivors compelled to take the oath of loyalty to His Imperial Majesty."

For a brief period during the Napoleonic onslaught on Russia the Ossetians and the Kabardinians joined forces to good effect, but they were eventually encircled by the Russians under Generals Yermolov and Paskevich. After this, a savage struggle for Caucasian independence raged from 1829 to 1859. It took the form of a Moslem Holy War, *Gassavat*, against the "Unbelievers" (the Russians), led by three successive Imams, the last of whom was the famous Shamil.

Perhaps to the Western Powers, busy with their own affairs in the late eighteen-twenties—revolutions were threatening everywhere and English opinion was preoccupied with the Reform Bill—and

later watching uneasily the development of Russia's strength, the struggle in the Caucasus seemed a convenient diversion of her energy.

"I ordered the slaughter of any who resisted and the burning of their villages and crops," wrote Prince Abazov to Count Chernyshev. "I have had the villages of Barzyqua, Latz, Hidikus and Vanasykh razed. . . . The Government of Russia possesses all the means for the complete annihilation and subjugation of the mountaineers who so far have been considered invincible. . . . For the greater security of our lines of communication it will be advantageous to deport the inhabitants on either side of the Georgian Military Highway and destroy their dwellings."

The official historian, Chudinov, decorated for his work, wrote: "It is essential for the safety of the Russian Empire that from the moment of their subjugation the North Caucasians should have no more history."

* * * * *

The beauty of the Caucasus was sung by Pushkin and Lermontov, and the Russian poets mixed with the golden society of Tsarist days at the fashionable Caucasian watering places. It was now that Lermontov wrote:

The homesteads burn and offer no protection
Sons of the Fatherland defeated by the foe.
As meteor, unquenchable the glow
Which plays upon the clouds, affrights the eye.
Like beast of prey, into the peaceful home
With bayonet the victor fights his way,
And maidens innocent and mothers young
With bloody hands to fondle has begun . . .¹

Lermontov observed that freedom was the divinity worshipped by the Caucasian peoples, and, little though the Tsars or their myrmidons heeded their great bard, he was right. The armed might which destroyed the independence of my country nearly a century ago never destroyed our ideals of liberty.

¹ *Izmail Bey*, Part III, Stanza II. 1832.

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